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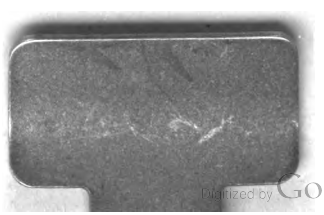

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WHY DO WE DIE?

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Why Do We Die?

An Essay in Thanatology

By Edward Mercer, D.D. (Oxon).

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PREFACE

WHY DO WE DIE!—Quite a different question from that so often asked: What happens after death? It is eminently natural that speculations about the Beyond should be perennial. But there is something strange in the fact that so few have tried to tell us why, having tasted of life, we should die at all.

From the standpoint of biology and physiology there are scientists who have devoted serious study to the phenomena of old age and death. From the side of the philosophers, moralists, and theologians, little has come that is of a thorough or systematic character. It would therefore seem that a useful purpose may be served if this so slightly explored territory be marked out and tentatively surveyed.

My object is to stimulate general interest rather than to expound for the few. I have therefore avoided, as far as possible, technical terms and specialist arguments. This does not imply, however, that the conclusions of authorities

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are not stated with accuracy. The conception of an organism as a society of persistent centres of the will-to-live has necessitated a brief statement of the Monadistic doctrine. It is hoped that the outline given of this too much neglected philosophy will be found of value on its own account, as well as for the particular purpose directly in view.

I have not always named the authors to whom I have been indebted ; I would ask them to accept his summarised expression of my gratitude.

J. Edward Mercer.

Chester.

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PART I

THE PROBLEM

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From morn to eve they struggled—Life and Death.
  At first it seemed to me that they in mirth
  Contended, and as foes of equal worth,
So firm their feet, so undisturbed their breath.
But when the sharp red sun cut through his sheath
  Of western clouds, I saw the brown arm's girth
  Tighten and bear that radiant form to earth,
And suddenly both fell upon the heath.
And then the wonder came—for when I fled
  To where those great antagonists down fell
    I could not find the body that I sought,
  And when and where it went I could not tell,
    One only form was left of those who fought,
The long dark form of Death—and it was dead.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

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Chapter I

FEAR AND KNOWLEDGE

I

The feud between death and humanity is of ancient standing. Life rebels against that which negates it—condemns it as a blemish on the natural order, an outrage on the legitimate hopes of a being who "thinks he was not made to die." What wonder, then, that the emotions stirred by death have been deep and strong! They may at times have been chastened by philosophic reflection or by religious submission; but they declare themselves from age to age with unrelenting vigour.

II

Life—the fact of being alive—is taken for granted. It brings with it its own justification. Indeed it is not until comparatively recent days that its origin has been seriously sought for. On the other hand, death so openly mocks at life's impulses and desires, so patently flouts reason and science, so inexorably asserts its universal sway, that it imposes

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its questionings with peculiar urgency and insistence. It formed the subject of some of the earliest myths; it has been at the core of many philosophies; it has been set in the light of modern thought. And still its mystery and its anomaly remain. Still it goads on to fresh enquiry and wider speculation.

The mystery and the anomaly remain. It must not be supposed, however, that the brilliant advances in what we may call "the new knowledge" cannot here, as elsewhere, open out fresh fields for enquiry and research. It is becoming increasingly possible to give the issues a cosmological setting—to find a place for them in an ordered system which shall embrace the physical and biological factors no less than the moral and spiritual. The sway of death is imperious as ever. Below all the myriad sounds that echo through the halls of life there yet persists the diapasoned burden, *Memento mori*. But the wider and fuller our world-view, the less sinister is the influence of that burden—the more truly "natural" becomes the happening that sets a term to "the life that now is." The data are multiplying; the range of speculation is expanding; rays of light from many quarters are being focussed on dark places hitherto

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unexplored. We may with reasonable hope, therefore, anticipate that the more men know of themselves and their environment, the less will be their fear of death.

III

Doubtless, there are not a few who will urge Spinoza's dictum that "the free man thinks of nothing less than death, and his wisdom is a meditation not of death, but of life." They will warn us that a study of death is unwholesome and unwise; that it will perturb and distract, and so unfit us for living life worthily. With Spinoza's dictum as a text, the familiar homily merits due consideration.

It cannot be denied that, in the past, reflection upon death has too often led to manifold evils. "Night Thoughts" and gruesome graveyard meditations have bulked too prominently, and have made life fevered and unnatural, either leading men to contemn or condemn the present as an illusion that veils the Real, or tempting them to clutch at what it offers ere the bubble burst on the shoreless ocean of the Unknown. Morbid asceticism, nerveless melancholy, hopeless fatalism—such may be the fruits of a study of death.

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All this is true, and the free man will hold it to be a part of his wisdom to bear it in mind. And yet we cannot but feel that it is not the whole truth, and that there must lurk some error when a dictum that has won for itself a rightful place among the weightiest is thus interpreted. If death is a fact, it should be squarely faced. To blink it is cowardly; to ignore it is folly. There must be some higher view-point which shall render it possible to bring death into a truer perspective. If such there be, and if it be within our range, the path of wisdom lies plain before us. We must wind our way to that view-point. So shall we rid us of morbid fears, of feverish anxieties, of faithless dallyings with a shallow Epicureanism. Instead of shutting out the disturbing cause, we should have a clearer vision of it, and therefore apprehend more truly its nature and meaning. The inevitable would still be the inevitable—but the harmful phantoms projected by an over-wrought imagination would vanish.

Here, then, is the essence of our problem. Is death an unnatural intruder into a domain that should know it not—a foe to life? Hitherto the reply of the race would be overwhelmingly in the affirmative. The modern mind is learning to reverse the verdict,

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because it has discovered that death plays its part in evolving the forms of life which have appeared on the globe in ascending degrees of dignity and value. If this reversal can be justified death will be invested with positive characteristics such as will make manifest its cosmic significance and allow it a due place in an ordered scheme which ever tends to fuller life.

Spinoza's dictum, then, may be welcomed as fundamentally true; but it must be guarded by careful interpretation. The "new knowledge" gives it a nobler sweep. Let us paraphrase it thus. The free man thinks of nothing less than death, because he is increasingly realising that it is not, as was thought, a negation of life, but a condition of its richer and ampler development. That is to say, meditation on death is transformed into a special phase of meditation on life.

IV

Another doubt insinuates itself. The contemplation of death has a powerfully disturbing influence on the emotions. Are we really capable of undertaking a dispassionate study of death, and of arriving at trustworthy conclusions as to its functions and significance? The difficulty is by no means

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academic. It brings to mind another famous dictum—not this time the product of calm philosophic meditation, but of keen and caustic wit. Rochefoucauld held that "neither the sun nor death can be looked at steadily." How much should be conceded here?

No serious thinker will pass lightly over the deliberate conclusion of one so versed in the workings of the human mind. The dictum has its place. Nevertheless there is no cause for discouragement. The very parallel adduced supplies healing virtue. For blinding as is the light of the sun when he rides high in a cloudless heaven, it is not always noon; the milder rays of his rising and setting are more tempered to our powers and teach us much. Moreover, as a Frenchman comments, astronomers have devised means for scanning his secrets even when in meridian glory. In like manner, though invested for most men with terrors that dazzle or blind, death can at times present itself in milder and even in friendly guise. And further, the scientist and the philosopher have learnt how in no inconsiderable measure to surmount their personal emotions, and how to study the dreaded happening in its more universal aspects.

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This detachment in regard of death is not a recent acquirement, however much the purely scientific form of it may be claimed as a special characteristic of our own age. So Socrates, for example, speaks to us out of a distant past. While the hemlock was actually doing its fatal work in his body, his mind was free. "We fear death as the greatest of evils, whereas it may be the greatest good." He bids us salute it, as it is fabled of swans, with a song of joy. So, in a generation nearer to us, Bacon declares "that death is a friend of ours, and he that is not ready to entertain him, is not at home." Rochefoucauld's dictum, therefore, while retaining its truth for the generality, need not dismay those who have learnt to control their emotions and submit them to the guidance of reason.

V

As knowledge increases, fear decreases. Will death, then, ever lose for us its mystery? Not so. Scientists are constantly making new discoveries about matter, and yet the mystery of it deepens. If this be the case with that which is nearest to us and most within the range of direct observation, much more will it be true of happenings which so

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much transcend that range. Birth, the beginning of life, is a mystery. Shall death, which terminates, be less?

Matter is a mystery. Men do not on that account slacken their efforts to know it better—rather does the element of the unknown lure them on to fresh endeavour. No otherwise should it be with the determination to probe death's secrets to the utmost. Let none presume to warn us from the quest. Spinoza's "free man" holds himself bound to increase his knowledge just because he thereby becomes more free. He scorns to be held in bondage to the spirit of fear. We are thus inspired to approach the problem of death in a spirit that is at once adventurous and sanely balanced—at once confident and reverent.

VI

Before embarking on this enterprise, let its aim be clearly defined. Death is a happening that divides two modes of being. It terminates organic life; it leads to—What? It may be asked, What is life? It may be asked, What comes after death? We are asking, Why do we die? There is inevitable interlacing here. But a determined

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effort will be made in this essay to keep the intermediate happening well in the focus of attention. The allied issues cannot be altogether avoided; but they can be kept in strict subordination. Only thus shall we succeed in reaching conclusions more satisfying and relevant than those usually presented in works that profess to treat of the narrower thesis.

VII

The enquiry thus defined and limited, will still prove to be sufficiently comprehensive. We shall have to ask why life should not be continuous; whether organic life contains in itself the seeds of dissolution; how far death is natural, how far unnatural; what is its teleology, biological, ethical, spiritual; in what ways does the evolutionary hypothesis aid us in determining its functions and significance.

The answers attainable may not carry us far in a search for ultimates. But it is assuredly a condition of success in the exploration of the obscurer regions which stretch away into the infinities of the past and the future that we shall have a firm hold on the facts presented in the course of our actual experience.

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We are called upon to decide between competing theories of man's origin and destiny—pre-existence, reincarnation, absorption, personal immortality, annihilation, and the rest. Will not a thorough and unprejudiced study of the happening which sets a term to existence in the body prove itself to be an important part of our equipment for the task? The restraint it imposes may at times be irksome; it cannot fail to be profitable. Our immediate concern is with death. Our ultimate object is a fuller understanding of life, and a firmer assurance of its victory over the grave.

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CHAPTER II

SYMBOLISM

I

THE mind of the peoples on the deep things of life is often revealed with great transparency in the symbols through which they have externalised so many of their emotions and ideas. A glance at the symbolism connected with death may therefore be expected to yield readily accessible aid when we ask what have been the impressions produced, in the course of history, by the experience of decay and dissolution.

II

The predominant attitude is certainly that of fear, evidence of which is abundant both in primitive communities and in ancient civilisations. Typical is the impressive personification in the Book of Job—the King of Terrors. There we have it—a shrinking that deepens to terror. It is not hard to understand why this should be. A chill of apprehension comes with the mere thought that

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life, with its impulse to maintain itself, with its clinging to the pleasant light of the sun, has an ineluctable end. But death is not alone the setting of a term to life as we know it—it also has its dread accompaniments. Disease, suffering, decay so often precede it. Darkness and the corruption of the tomb follow it. Added to these physical causes of fear are the pang of separation from familiar scenes and loved faces, the lonely leap into the unknown, the uncertainty as to the lot of the departed in the sunless underworld. Body and mind combine in the despair of unavailing protest. All is summed up in the vivid and pregnant personification, the King of Terrors. With fresh detail, but unchanged intention, it reappears in Revelation. "I saw and behold a pale horse; and he that sat upon him, his name was death, and Hades followed with him."

III

Fear has been the predominant emotion in the ancient world; still, it was not universal. The attitude characteristic of the Greeks, for example, shows dignity and restraint. This exception is all the more remarkable because the Greek had a keen joy in life—

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in "the mere living." He was sensitive in proportion to his high culture. His picturings of the underworld were forbidding. Homer makes his warrior exclaim—"I had rather be a serf and till the ground than rule among the dead." In spite of his cheerless creed, reflection enabled the Greek to meet Death with calm dignity. Hesiod makes Death a son of night and a brother of Ker and Sleep; he recognises the mystery; but he is free from horror. Euripides brings Death on the stage as an enemy, indeed, deaf even to the entreaties of an Apollo. Still, there is no horror. Death is an austere priest clad in a dark robe, wearing the sacrificial sword with which he cuts off a lock of hair from the dying to devote it to the underworld.

So it was with Greek sculptors. They avoided anything which might suggest fear. At Sparta there were statues of Death and Sleep, and each is represented as a slumbering youth. The general symbol was a genius with a torch turned upside down.

Not that the Greek did not face the facts. He could not avoid them. But the sense of fitness and beauty triumphed over their harsher and more repulsive features. And hence an authority can write thus. "The

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Greek genius kindled before the vision of life and death into a clearer flame. The sepulchral reliefs show us many aspects of death; in all of the best period there is a common note mingled of a grave tenderness, simplicity and reserve. The quiet figures there take leave of one another with the same grace that their life had shown. There is none of the horror of darkness, none of the ugliness of dying; with calm faces and undisturbed raiment they rise from their seats and take the last farewell. But the sepulchral verses show us more clearly the grief that lay beneath the quiet lines of the marble, and the smooth cadence of the couplets. They cover and fill in the whole range of emotion."

IV

Christianity brought with it a sure hope of life beyond. It cared little for the physical fact, and faced it fearlessly in its most terrible shapes. The first Christians were possessed by an idea of the future that converted death into a mere incident of little or no account. Hence their symbolism was marked by a calmness and restraint akin to that of the Greeks. It transcended it by being suffused with a new-born sense of light and joy. On the walls of the catacombs we see the bird set

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at liberty, the palm branch, the chariot at rest, the ship at anchor—symbols prompted by a conception, not of a monster to be dreaded, but of "a conductor of souls" to a happier sphere.

How strange, how disastrous the change to the horrible and repellent imaginings of mediæval, and even of modern Christendom! The Greeks, though naturally restrained, at times allowed their cruder feelings to run riot, and certain of their mythologising poets revelled in picturing death as a hideous, cadaverous deity, with hour-glass and scythe. His hollow eyes were fixed upon the running sand; and when the last grains had passed, he sallied forth in ghoulish joy to mow down his prey. The artists and sculptors of the mediæval Church resuscitated this terrorising symbolism, with the added horror that the cadaverous deity became a grinning skeleton. An early instance, though not the most savage, is Giotto's crowned skeleton at Assisi. One better known is the series of wood engravings by Holbein, with title, "The Dance of Death." On the frontispiece Death raises a curtain, and the artist represents himself as filled with horror and dismay at what he sees. Then follow the tragic scenes. The skeleton fiend summons all sorts and con-

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ditions—kings and peasants, priests and paladins, fair women and tender children—to join his ghastly revels.

The Reformation did not lift these conceptions on to any higher level. Milton, for instance, gives us his imagery of

> "the other shape . . . .
> black it stood as night,
> Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
> And shook a dreadful dart."

And there is a monument in our national abbey on which Death is represented as a fearsome skeleton, forcing his way upwards from a tomb, and threatening with his dart those who pass before it.

V

So much for the debased phase of Christian symbolism. Happily in recent years there has been a return to conceptions more in harmony with the spirit of the earlier symbolism. Many influences have been at work, not the least effectual of which has been the advance in ordered knowledge of Nature.

The transition is strikingly shown in such a picture as Rethel's "Death as a Friend," engraved about midway in the last century. In an old Gothic belfry, leaning back in his wonted seat, an aged sexton has fallen on his

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long sleep. At his side are his book of prayers and the remains of his simple meal; close by is his wide-brimmed hat with its shells that suggest their story of accomplished pilgrimage. Death himself is tolling the passing-bell. He is a skeleton, indeed, but clad in a habit which allows nothing of his form to be seen save the foreshortened face, the hands and sandalled feet. He comes as a friend. He bends gently, even lovingly, to his task. Out through the window is seen the rising sun flooding the landscape with the light of a new day. And on the sill a little bird sings its morning carol.

VI

Thus did the evil dreams begin to depart. The mischief wrought will be hard to eradicate, but the new spirit is triumphing. The foul fiend conception gives place to that of a mysterious angel with a divine commission, a cosmic task. Consider such a picture as Watts' "Court of Death"—a picture which presents so fine a foil to Holbein. Death is a dark angel-queen, and holds her court. Before her appear the woman and the soldier in their prime, the woman and the king advanced in years, the beggar leaning on

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his crutch, the strong lion. In her lap lies a new-born infant. Her presence though solemnising, is gentle; not even the young need shrink from it. And throned as she is, she makes us feel that she is not an absolute monarch, but an emissary of a yet mightier monarch whose concern is not with death but life.

VII

One of the symbols mentioned calls for more than passing notice—the alliance of death with sleep. It appealed powerfully, as we saw, to the Greek mind. Modern poets have not been slow to seize upon it. We cannot wonder at the strength of its appeal, for there is in this alliance something more than symbolism. It suggests a deep underlying community of nature; and the suggestion is of the kind that gains in force as knowledge grows.

Hesiod makes Death the brother of Sleep. Homer sings of

> "Sleep and Death, two twins of wingéd race,
> Of matchless swiftness but of silent pace."

The more reflective Shelley exclaims:—

> "How wonderful is Death,
> Death and his brother Sleep."

Hood dwells on the physical likeness with exquisite felicity.

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" Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears are hopes belied ;
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died."

And have not the poets warrant ? As a matter of direct experience, our so-called continuous life is broken up by a succession of periods of unconsciousness. For a third of our lives we do not consciously exist. And each time that we wake, we have a glimpse of what it is to die. And yet the personality persists. The analogy is so close and intimate that it is used in metaphysical treatises as a basis for serious argument.

VIII

The thought that comes uppermost when this analogy is pursued is the " naturalness " of death. Hence Schopenhauer writes thus. " The care with which the insect prepares a cell, or hole, or nest, deposits its egg in it, together with food for the larva that will come out of it in the following spring, and then quietly dies, is just like the care with which in the evening a man lays ready his clothes and his breakfast for the next morning, and then goes quietly to sleep."

Thus it is that reason, if it brings at times a horror of death, provides the antidote.

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Chapter III

CAUSES OF THE FEAR OF DEATH

I

In the opening chapter it was argued that it is the part of the wise man to study the nature and function of death. A glance at the symbolism in which different ages and peoples have expressed their emotions and thoughts has made it plain that change of attitude is possible; and that the trend in the present day is towards larger and happier conceptions. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the fear is by no means yet cast out. *Timor mortis conturbat me* is the melancholy refrain of a poem by a Scottish poet, quoted by a writer on this subject, who adds that it is a refrain "only too common in the literature of all times."

II

The causes of this fear have been already lightly touched upon; let us examine them a little more fully. The most obvious are the physical phenomena—the pains that precede

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death, the pains of death itself, the dissolution that succeeds.

The pains that precede are not justly to be laid to the charge of death. For, as Maeterlinck points out, they are the result of life-processes in conflict with that which threatens them. Death, instead of being their cause, is the event which terminates them. The pains of dying, as will be shown anon, have been greatly exaggerated, in many cases, if not in most, they are never experienced at all. Yet more groundless are the fears of what succeeds death—the dissolution of the body. The chill and darkness of the sepulchre, the inroads of corruption, and all that a shrinking imagination associates with these, have no concern for the dead. By them they are unfelt, unknown.

An instance of the confusions of thought involved is found in the venerable idea embodied in a Vedic hymn, "O earth, lie light upon him, hurt not his limbs." So, too, the Latins—*Sit tibi terra levis*. A pathetic turn is given to the familiar petition in a Roman epitaph on a little girl. "Earth, lie not heavy on her. She was so light a burden to thee." The naïve naturalness of the thought is pathetic. And yet how plainly groundless is the fear! There are times

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when even a modern mind, at sight of some ponderous tombstone, may for a moment yield to the suggestion of its oppressiveness but the fancy is a passing one, and is parried with a smile. In this case, the confused thinking is easily corrected. It is high time that other of our notions about the physical accompaniments of death should be seen to have a foundation no less unsubstantial.

III

Nature has had her share in creating a fear of death; but man has grievously added to the burden. He has surrounded the event which terminates life in the body with a profusion of customs and ceremonies that terrify even more than the happening itself. It is indeed fitting and right that in the chamber where lies a dying man, there should be hushed voices, soft tread, and chastened movements. Grief must have its vent, and affection its outward manifestation. Is there not a danger, however, of a lack of restraint which may unnecessarily depress the sufferer, and unduly sadden the reflections of the survivors? And when all is over, how often does the dismal pomp of the funeral over-

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shadow the soul with its fictitious and unwholesome gloom.

The spirit of reform is abroad. But it has to permeate the multitudes far more thoroughly before there is an end of ceremonies and conventions which no appeal to antiquity can justify.

IV

We go deeper when we ask what are the intellectual and moral causes of the fear of death. The one that stands out most prominently is "the leap in the dark." And we get to its core if we ask why so many are afraid of the dark. Some say we have inherited the feeling from ancestors who lived in forests and caves. Their every step was taken with foreboding of a lurking danger. There is perhaps some element of truth in this, though the notion may easily be overworked. For it leaves without explanation elements in the experience which are much more complex than a sense of danger. Is it not rather that in the dark we lose the familiar world of forms and colours? Our senses lack the stimuli which keep them working in the well-known grooves, and which so largely create the consciousness of the self. There is

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thus a feeling that a limit is reached beyond which is the untried, the unknown.

If this be the experience in the case of the darkness which is itself a part of our familiar environment, how much stronger must be the emotion stirred by the thought of a leap into a darkness which is of another world, and which suggests a void without known character or form? Reason is well nigh silent; imagination is uncontrolled. The sense of a limit reached is indefinitely deepened.

Consider from this point of view the admirable simplicity and directness of a Greek epitaph, "Earth and Birth-goddess, thou who didst bear me and thou who coverest me, farewell, I have accomplished the course between you, and I go, not discerning whither I shall travel; for I know not either whose or who I am, or whence I came to you." So Euripides in his Hippolytus makes the nurse moralise that no one would endure the ills of life if it were not that the future is unknown. So, in the modern world, with all that science, philosophy, and religion have in the meantime taught, Carlyle can write thus: "All other epochs (than death) are transition-points from one visible condition to another visible. . . . But the day in a mortal's destinies which is like no other is his death

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day : here, too, is a transition, what we may call a bridge, as at other epochs ; but now from the keystone onwards half the arch rests on invisibility."

V

Dread of the unknown is the most potent cause of the fear of death. It may be overcome by a spirit of high adventure, by a realisation of the naturalness of death, by philosophic reflection, by a deep religious faith. These are the remedies that possess the fullest measure of healing virtue. On the other hand, solemn counsels to muster courage defeat themselves ; for they assume and intensify the very dread they would dispel.

Alas ! religions have at times not scrupled to avail themselves of this fear of the unknown by filling in the void with pictures calculated to dismay. We have but to read Dante, or visit a Calvary in some continental city, or listen to the fulminations of some fiery Calvinistic divine, to realise how dogma and imagination have combined to make the leap in the dark a terrible one. Fortunate for us that we live in days when such unwarranted accretions to pure religion are being repudiated.

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VI

Man is not only ignorant of the Beyond; he suffers the further anxiety of not knowing when the leap must be taken. So far as he can discover, there is no rational or moral method in the selection of death's victims. Tender infants, youths, men in their prime, the strong, the weak, the learned, the unlearned, the sinner, the saint, are stricken with what seems, from the human point of view, an inevitable caprice. The uncertainty is aggravated by the growing recognition of the value and dignity of the individual. The strain becomes tense on behalf of others as well as for one's self—so, too, is deepened the poignancy of grief for the survivors. Death's dart has more piercing power the more fully frail mortals learn to love and to be loved. His wounds are sorest in the souls that are touched to the finest issues. Doubtless it is better "to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." Yet the loss is there, and compels dark questionings. We here approach the moral and spiritual teleology of our subject, and this must be reserved for a later stage of the inquiry. Meanwhile, we note that if death's sway is mysteriously augmented by the enhancing of personal

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values, there is rich compensation. The crudity of that sway is wondrously transmuted.

VII

Strong and extended as is the fear of death, it has never overmastered the keen play of human passion. In all ages men have braved death in the service of home and country, of truth and justice; even science has its martyr roll. Nay, evil causes rank with good in this regard—love of fame and military glory, of power and empire. Bacon has noted the fact with his wonted terseness. "It is worthy of observing that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it makes and masters the fear of death; and therefore death is no such terrible enemy when a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat of him. Revenge triumphs over death; love slights it; honour aspireth to it; grief flieth to it; fear pre-occupateth it."

VIII

Passion can defy—but what of quiet reflection? The case is not so clear. Montaigne counselled us to keep in touch

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with the *memento mori*. "Let us disarm death of his strangeness; let us converse with him; let us have nothing so often in our thoughts as death; let us continually represent him to our imagination under all possible shapes." Again—"Children are afraid of their best friends when they see them with masks on; and so it is with us. We must strip the mask from things as well as persons: take that away, and we shall find beneath but that same death which a valet or simple chambermaid passed through but just now without fear."

There is much here that is sound. And yet we cannot but feel that the note is somewhat forced. A constant dwelling on the theme of death is evidence that the mind is morbidly sensitive, and that it has failed to get things into right perspective. Better far the simple and natural increase of knowledge—of insight, scientific, rational, spiritual. True, the mask must be stripped. But the hand that strips it should be strong and steady.

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Chapter IV

THE SENSATION OF DYING

I

It is difficult for a man in full health to divest himself of what health brings with it—vivid feeling and quick-moving thought. Life under normal conditions asserts itself with conviction, and with similar conviction shrinks from all that threatens or negates it. And thus when a healthy man tries to imagine what it is to die, he supposes that the ordeal is undergone with sensations and emotions as keen as those he himself possesses. In this he greatly errs. For, generally speaking, along with waning of the bodily powers goes dulling of nerve sensitiveness and loss of mental vigour. The lamp burns low. And thus it is true to say that "the pains of death" exist almost wholly in the imaginations of those who are not dying.

The error is not however altogether without excuse. For it is easy to misinterpret the real significance of what is not infrequently seen at a deathbed. The clammy brow, the

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convulsive twitching of muscles, the contorted features, the gasping for breath—these and other like signs ordinarily indicate suffering that is consciously felt and more or less consciously expressed. It would seem to argue a lack of sympathy to regard them otherwise when a man is dying. And yet there is little doubt that, in such a case, these bodily processes, though the result of nerve-currents, seldom rise into the sphere of genuine sentience. As life ebbs, so does the threshold of consciousness fall, until it sinks into the unconscious, and the actual dying is painless both to body and mind.

II

Even when the space between healthy life and death is brief, it is not at all certain that the case is otherwise. Naturalists who have defended Nature against a charge of cruelty, have argued that the victims of beasts of prey do not suffer much. They use the well-known account given by Livingstone of his sensations when seized by a lion. "Starting and looking half round, I saw a lion just in the act of springing on me. I was upon a little height; he caught my shoulder as he sprang, and we both came together to the ground below.

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Growling horribly, he shook me as a terrier does a rat. The shock produced a stupor similar to that which seems to be felt by a mouse after the first shake of the cat. It causes a sort of dreaminess *in which there was no sense of pain or feeling of terror*, though I was quite conscious of all that was happening. It was like what patients partially under the influence of chloroform describe, who see all the operation but feel not the knife. This singular condition was not the result of any mental process. The shake annihilated fear, and allowed no sense of horror in looking round at the beast."

A hardly less well-known case, also frequently quoted, is that of Whymper's accident on the Matterhorn. He fell nearly two hundred feet in seven or eight bounds. Here is his footnote in the fifth chapter of the "Scrambles Amongst the Alps." "As it seldom happens that one survives such a fall, it may be interesting to record what my sensations were during its occurrence. I was perfectly conscious of what was happening, and felt each blow; but, like a patient under chloroform, experienced no pain. Each blow was naturally more severe than that which preceded it, and I distinctly remember thinking, 'Well, if the next is

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harder still, that will be the end!' Like persons who have been rescued from drowning, I remember that the recollection of a multitude of things rushed through my head, many of them trivialities or absurdities, which had been forgotten long before; and, more remarkable, this bounding through space did not feel disagreeable. But I think that in no very great distance more, consciousness as well as sensation would have been lost, and upon that I base my belief, improbable as it seems, that death by a fall from a great height is as painless an end as can be experienced."

III

From such experiences as these we may conclude that sudden and violent death preceded by a shock to body or mind, is easy and painless. So also, normally, is the death that succeeds long illness; still more that which is the result of debility and decay. It would be going too far to maintain that there is never pain at the time of death. The struggle for breath is probably the most consciously trying, and for the longest time. But severe pains are exceptions to a general rule. "Even in the most awful death known (says a writer on this theme), death by burning, mortality is rendered painless at an early

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stage by suffocation. It is the first moment of experience of the heat that is so terrible ; we think, in imagination, that we could never endure it, and wonder how the martyrs faced it with such calm. But, apart from that state of spiritual ecstasy, their sufferings were soon ended by Nature herself, which appears to set very real limits to physical torture."

IV

The pains of death, then, are much exaggerated. But, as has been already hinted, strictly speaking death has no pains at all. When life and death contend, it is life that is the positive agent ; death is simply its negation. If we rightly discriminate, therefore, we should speak of " the pains of life."

It is the will-to-live which struggles and, in struggling, suffers. Death marks the time when the will-to-live yields to its conqueror. Hence the strength of the position taken up by pessimists, eastern and western, when they maintain that if we would escape pain, we must crush down the will-to-live. Schopenhauer's whole system turns on this thought ; and his followers are neither few nor unfamed. A controversy on pessimism is not now our concern ; we are only seeking

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to get to the right standpoint for a study of death; and the doctrine is thus far useful to us in that it helps us to draw a distinction which clears the issues. On the physical side, accurate thought will not attribute pain to death but to life. Our problem, then, is this —Why should life-processes have to wage a conflict? Why should they not be immortal?

V

It is possible in certain cases to go further still. For there is abundant evidence that dying may not only be painless, physically and mentally, but may even be occupied by a pleasant sense of restful peace. Nay, there are some who have undergone the experience but have been brought back to life at the last moment, and who assure us that they were possessed by a feeling of ecstasy. Pope had some such idea in his mind when he wrote his seriously intended, though characteristically artificial "Ode on Dying": "Lend, lend your wings, I mount, I fly."

The more closely, therefore, the sensation of dying is judged by the experiences available, the more are we led to conclude that, while the anticipation of it may stir emotion, it need not cause dismay.

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Chapter V

FUGA MORTIS

I

Death, then, is the negation of the will-to-live. That there exists in normal organisms, under normal conditions, a will to persist there can be no reasonable doubt. True it is that animals, with a few curiously arresting exceptions, have no idea of death; they appear to be limited to a sense of coming danger; and their struggles to escape seem to have conscious reference to this end alone. And yet, even in the case of animals, we shall be superficial if we hastily conclude that there is nothing more. The hunted hare, the panting hind, will strain every nerve to escape their pursuers; the startled bird will crouch; the insect will seek for shelter; the lowest of known organisms have their self-protective movements. Is there not an evident clinging to life which, though it may be independent of the conscious will, is none the less a positive agency in the preservation of the individual and the development of the species? To call this clinging an "instinct"

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will not suffice. It is something far more radical and universal. Instinct is but one of its manifestations. The *fuga mortis* is simply the obverse of that will-to-live which we men have brought within the sphere of conscious experience and reflection. Let us consider it as we find it on the human level, and thus avoid unnecessary complications and controversies. There can at any rate be no question that we ourselves know what life and death mean, and that, of set purpose, we cherish the one and avoid the other.

II

Is this *fuga mortis* a constant quantity ; or does it vary in degree at different stages ? In answering this question, the distinction between the conscious and the sub-conscious factors must be kept in view. There are functions of the organism which are essential to life and which are yet outside the control of the conscious will—the beating of the heart, the rise and fall of the breathing, the digestive processes, and the rest. These are each and all evidences of nature's efforts to ward off death—for continuous adjusting of a continuously disturbed balance of the vital forces. So, too, with the instances of what

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is called, without recognising its implications, the *vis conservatrix naturae*—the marvellous contrivances for combating more special and serious disturbances caused by disease or wounds. Death is ever lurking to attack. The will-to-live, down in the sub-conscious sphere, is ever on its guard, from the embryo stage until the close of life. Its success, of course, will vary according to the amount and quality of the vital force there is behind it.

III

The case is somewhat different where conscious will is at work. Consciousness itself varies in degrees of clearness, not only at successive epochs in the life of the individual, but from day to day and hour to hour; and broadly speaking the desire to live varies concurrently. During infancy it is but feebly manifested; even the movements, cries, likes and dislikes, that apparently argue the conscious play of will, are largely prompted by sub-conscious processes—impulse and instinct. But there can be observed a gradual development of purposive effort. The will-to-live comes to the surface as it were. In childhood it more definitely reveals itself in new forms, as for example in

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the repugnance roused by the sight of a human corpse—a shrinking that is seated deep in the organism, though coloured by reflection and reason. The area of knowledge, however, is restricted, and consciousness lacks material.

> "A simple child
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death?"

We find accordingly that youth is careless, prodigal, of life. It has not learnt its conditions or its value. Advancing years, however, bring experience and discretion. The subconscious element is still active, but receives more definite aid from conscious purpose and guidance. The interactions of the two are constant and intricate. Life is more adequately valued and guarded.

IV

But what of old age? Rousseau is quoted. "Life becomes dearer to us as its joys pass way. The old cling to it more than the young." Is this true? The evidence is conflicting, and we must draw distinctions between what comes of nature and what results from the artificial conditions which civilisation imposes. The ageing of the body

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hardly ever runs its natural course. More especially does the mind undergo modifications which throw it out of step, as it were, with the organic processes. Hence the desire to live may persist in the mind when the body has outlived it.

On the other hand, we should anticipate that along with decay of the body would go decrease in the intensity of consciousness, and therefore of the conscious element in the will-to-live. Can it be denied that there is much evidence in favour of this expectation ? There are some authorities who go so far as to maintain that the will-to-live may be reversed, and become a will-to-die. Metchnikoff, for instance, inclines to this view. He adduces, among other cases, one noted by Toharski. A female centenarian whose mental faculties were not seriously impaired, said : " If you come to live as long as I have lived, you will understand not only that it is possible not to fear Death, but to feel the same need for death as for sleep." This state of mind was not due to long endurance of pain, or to the burden of a continued sorrow, but the outcome of a natural process. After discussing various aspects of the question, Metchnikoff himself concludes thus, " The instinct of death seems to lie, in some potential form, deep in the

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constitution of man. If the cycle of human life followed its ideal course, according to physiological function, then the instinct of death would appear in its time, after a normal life and an old age healthy and prolonged."

V

Such a conclusion would seem to contradict the affirmation with which this chapter opened, that the will-to-live is fundamental. The inference, however, is by no means necessary. For the distinction remains between the conscious and the sub-conscious elements in the clinging to life. Further, there is another distinction to be drawn—that between the true centre of will and the organism which is built up round it. The relation between the two cannot be fully understood until the nature of the organism has been determined; and this is a subject for special treatment hereafter. Suffice it now to say that if an organism be regarded, not as the instrument, or home, of a single centre, but as a group of centres peculiarly constituted into a temporary unity, the apparent contradiction we are examining disappears. For it may well then be that the desire to prolong the existence of a particular

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grouping of will-centres may decay and be reversed, while the individual centres may continue to cling to life and seek for other enrichments of their experience.

In any case the basal fact remains that for a normal human being, in a normal state of health, and in a normal environment, it is natural to cling to life and to ward off what may endanger it. Death negates this desire—at any rate so far as a will-centre is dependent on the existence of a particular organism. Our problem is to discover why this thwarting of the desire should be universal and inevitable. Does it constitute a victory for the powers of destruction ; or is it a condition of the fuller satisfaction of the will-to-live ? The real issue already gains in clearness. Already there is strong leading as to the direction in which a solution must be sought.

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CHAPTER VI

PRIMITIVE CONCEPTIONS

I

A NATURAL preliminary to the systematic study of our subject from the modern standpoint is a review of what past thinkers have accomplished. Only the barest outline is possible if the proportion of things is to be observed. For the aim of this essay is not historical; it seeks to arrive at definite conclusions.

The well-known story of the Buddha strikingly condenses the experience of humanity at large when face to face with the stern facts of decay and death. Primitive emotion was vaguer; nevertheless it was essentially akin to that awakened in minds nurtured by the advanced civilisations. The Buddha was exploring the gardens of the Kalpilavastu. He passed in turn a broken and decrepit old man, a suffering, sick man, and a funeral procession. He recognised in these sights what were the ceaseless enemies of human life and happiness. The iron entered into

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his soul. The experience determined his career and provided the master motive of his philosophy and religion.

II

In the primitive stage, man struggled hard to explain these perturbing happenings. He was more especially anxious to rid them of their appearance of inevitability. He even persuaded himself that death is not really death at all—or rather, perhaps, he simply failed to grasp its finality. His basis for reflection was the strange medley of beliefs that goes under the name of animism. The term is now unfortunately used in various senses, but its main drift is plain—the affirmation that all the objects presented to the senses are in some fashion alive. The life may be looked upon as inherent in the objects themselves; or as that of non-human beings who dwell in what is otherwise inanimate; or as that of the ghosts of departed men who have taken up their abode in such objects. But in any case it was life. The creed was crude and incoherent. Nevertheless it was nearer to the truth than many of the more vaunted of later speculations. In describing this notion of a universal life,

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philosophers, thinking themselves wise, have devised systems which have lost touch with the realities of a truly human experience.

Saturated with this animistic idea, primitive thinkers conceived that when a man died, he did not therefore disappear; he was merely transformed into some other kind of being. His "dead" body was not the same as when it was alive here; but "dead" did not mean what it means for us—a final dissolution of the organism. The individual lived on in a form not too remote from his former condition. Hence there were buried with him weapons, ornaments, foods, and other belongings which had been of use to him during life. And when he came sound and whole, to visit the living in dreams, the appearance at once stimulated and confirmed the belief in his continued existence.

It was only likely, therefore, that primitive thinkers found it difficult to grasp the idea of death as such. It seemed to them to be generally due to accident or violence. In the cases where an external cause did not readily present itself, some special explanation was sought. In the Fiji Islands, for instance, there prevails a myth that two gods disputed how man should die. Ra Vula, the Moon, contended that he should die like himself;

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that is, disappear awhile and then return. Ra Kalavo, the Rat, would not agree to this. "Let man die (he said) as a rat dies." And his decision prevailed.

Another type of explanation attributes the calamity to some act of disobedience. A familiar example is the Genesis story of the Fall—found in Africa, Australia, and Japan with variations characteristic of the races which adopted it.

A yet more frequent explanation is the operation of secret magic. Witchcraft, as Tylor shows us, is a vividly pervasive factor in savage life. "There are rude races of Australia and South America whose intense belief in it has led them to declare that if men were never bewitched and never killed by violence, they would not die at all." How strange and tragic the recrudescence of this idea in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of European history!

III

The salient point is that even with the facts of decay and death before him, primitive man would not bring himself to see in them a cessation of life-functions, or a term to wonted activities. For him it long remained

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a happening that was on a level with ordinary experience, though possessing peculiarly uncanny characteristics. The dead man was not really dead—he lived on in his familiar form; he could hunt and fish, go to war, visit and converse with friends, have a share for good or ill in all that concerned their life. Or if his abode was pictured as distant and apart, the manner and interests of his life were thought to be unchanged. There are still tribes which have not outgrown this uncritical stage, and which have not grasped the conception of death as a happening that is as final as it is natural.

IV

May we venture to recognise the true inwardness of the primitive attitude in such a passage as this from Jefferies' "Story of My Heart"? He was sitting among some grass-grown tumuli on the hills, and became absorbed in the life and glory of the scene. "I felt at that moment that I was like the spirit of the man whose body was interred in the tumulus; I could understand and feel his existence the same as my own. He was as real to me two thousand years after interment as those I had seen in the body. The abstract

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personality of the dead seemed as existent as thought. As my thought could slip back the twenty centuries in a moment to the forest-days when he hurled the spear, or shot with the bow, hunting the deer, and could return again as swiftly to this moment, if his spirit could endure from then till now, and the time was nothing. . . . Resting by the tumulus, the spirit of the man who had been interred there was to me really alive, and very close. This was quite natural, as natural and simple as the grass waving in the wind, the bees humming, and the larks' songs. Only by the strongest effort of my mind could I understand the idea of extinction; that was supernatural, requiring a miracle; the immortality of the soul natural, like earth."

V

Such sublimation of the primitive idea makes direct appeal to some of our deepest intuitions. The persistent barrier to its acceptance is the dividing it postulates between body and soul. The primitive mind vaguely evaded the difficulty by imagining the body in some fashion to continue its existence. May it not be that the relation of the body to the individual will-centre has been misconceived?

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Chapter VII

DEATH AND THE PHILOSOPHERS

I

Out of the vague animistic conceptions arose a distinction between the body known in this life and the body that belonged to the next. This suggested a further refinement. The second body was a "double" which dwelt in the first body, and separated from it at death—the ruling doctrine of Egyptian thanatology. Antiquity generally, adhering to this distinction with no formulation of definite theory, developed the idea of a shadowy "self" that survived the body, and with a pale reflection of this fuller life, continued its being in an underworld. More serious reflection, out of this material, arrived at the conception of a soul—a spiritual "self" quite distinct from the body. The way was prepared for the philosophers.

II

The most profound and influential among the developments of the "soul" conception

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is that of Plato. It is presented with dramatic setting and with elaborate dialectic in the Phædo—the dialogue which has been described as "the mightiest of the pyramids raised by human hope beside the great river of Time." With its arguments we are not directly concerned; but we seize on its central doctrine that death is the separating of two alien elements. The soul is the true man; the body is a prison-house. The combined simplicity and nobility of this teaching have secured for it wide acceptance.

It is interesting to note, however, that Aristotle, though at first attracted by the doctrine, subsequently abandoned it. The sharpness of the distinction roused his suspicions of its validity. Still, he did not carry his rebellion so far as to deny the existence of a "rational spirit." His insistence on the *rôle* of form as a constituent of reality kept him true to the conception of a world-process in which everything has its part. He will not separate what is a vast whole into dead matter and living spirit. In spite of this sounder world view, however, he did not altogether succeed in shaking off the Platonic dualism; nor did he give any rational account of why we have a body or of why that body should die. For he regards the union between flesh

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and spirit as temporary, disturbing, and distracting. For him, too, in his higher flights, the natural life is the spirit's death, and with death comes a revival of prenatal glories.

The Platonic view is contained in the classic lines—

> " Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But while this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Or, again, we may compare Browning—

> " Like the hand which ends a dream,
> Death with the might of his sunbeam
> Touches the flesh and the soul awakes."

There must be elements of truth in a doctrine so nobly expounded and so extended in its range of influence. And yet, august as it is, it fails to provide for the universal happening we call death a natural setting. It is out of step with that unquenchable endeavour to find a fundamental unity underlying the bewildering many.

III

If we turn to the Roman Stoics as representatives of a later phase of speculation, we trace a tendency to look on death as a thing " indifferent." The hard dualism appears in the garb of a hazy pantheism. Soul and

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body alike are to be reabsorbed into the whole, though a dubious hope is allowed of the persistence of the higher factor. Marcus Aurelius, for instance, speaks in this regard with an uncertain voice. In one passage he speaks as though the dissolution might affect the body only. "Philosophy is to await death peacefully, and to view it as merely the dissolution of the elements which compose the human frame." But in another passage he is more completely negative. "Remember well that the feeble and composite creature, your soul, will one day resolve into its atoms; the faint spark of life will be extinguished, or be assigned to some other dwelling place." But if we ask him what is the relation between soul and body?—why should they come together?—why should they be parted?—for such questions he has no answer.

In the Stoic teaching, however, notable advance is achieved in one direction. Death is declared to be "natural." "In death (says Aurelius) there is nothing repugnant to the essence of an intelligent being, nor to the general plan of our nature." And again, and yet more sturdily, "That which is not against nature cannot be evil." "For after all, nature forges the links and nature breaks

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them." He expands his own contention thus. "Do we not pass from infancy to youth, grow up, become tall, reach manhood? Do not our teeth come, our beards grow, and our hair turn white? . . . Are not all such events in their due season the work of nature? Death comes through the same agency. It therefore behoves a wise man to approach death neither with anger, repugnance, nor contempt, but to await it like any other operation of nature."

Here is wholesome doctrine!—doctrine that is enforced increasingly by every forward step in knowledge of man and of his place in nature. For if death be natural, it has a function. And if life be the goal of the evolutionary process, then death is ultimately a life-producing agency.

IV

Eastern Pantheism took quite another line. For Hinduism life is death, and death is life. The Trinity, Brama, Vishnu, and Siva, are but one God, who fulfils alternately the part of creator, conserver, and destroyer. Thus death and life conjoined to produce a series of substitutions. Hence the doctrine of reincarnations; each reappearance succeeds a

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death which marks a stage in the history of an individual life. This doctrine was subsequently developed on more mystical lines. The body is ignored ; the true deliverance is found in the complete crushing of the will-to-live, and in absorption into Nirvana.

The Nirvana development is evidently useless in arriving at any rational view about the meaning and function of death. But the reincarnation doctrine is full of promise. For life is then regarded as advancing by stages, and each appearance in a body has its place in a morally ordered succession. Death can thus be regarded as a transitional happening which admits a persistent will centre to a new series of experiences. It is quite consonant, in regard to this concept of transition, with the monadistic theory which will be advocated in the third part of this essay.

V

When we come to the modern world, an outstanding feature of thought on the problem of death is the large place that has been occupied by a militant materialism. The man is nothing but his organism ; and when that dies, he dies. This negative school appeals

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to the discoveries of science. So far, so good. Any speculation which ignores those discoveries stands self-condemned. But if there is a determination not to move outside the circle described by strictly scientific method, the really vital factors are lost sight of; the rich reality is mutilated.

All that science can tell us about death is simply this. In a living organism we can observe a certain amount of complex material controlled in a certain way by virtue of the play of physical and chemical forces. When the control ceases, the materials of the organism are dissolved. But to claim that such an account exhausts the facts and experiences of a human life is worse than preposterous—it is tragic. Happily, the modern world is moving on to a more rational and adequate realisation of the complexity of existence. Science is seen to be an abstraction from a total which is beyond its grasp. It can tell us much; but it cannot tell us all.

The reaction against exaggerated claims on the part of science has its dangers. It may land us in the nebulosities of an irresponsible mysticism. The physical organism after all, is a solid fact,; it has its history; it does actually behave in accordance with physical and chemical laws; it does actually

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grow, decay, die. It must be loyally reckoned with in any attempt to solve the problem of death. Science must be honoured, and gratefully followed so far as its leading can take us.

VI

Speaking broadly, the modern mind is not in a mood to refuse authority to the ineradicable intuition, so nearly universal, that death is not really an ending. Obviously, the data for arriving at clearly-cut conclusions are imperfect. But the doctrine of conservation is not of physical import only or chiefly. Long before science was tracking the changing forms of energy, great thinkers were declaring that no true values can ever be lost. And the experiences gained by a will-centre in the course of its life in an organism are assuredly of higher value than the physical happenings which have conditioned them. What, then, is the relation of death to the conservation of the higher values? Annihilation, Bergson contends, is unthinkable. What is the alternative? The persistence of the will centre which can alone truly "possess" the experience.

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VII

Schopenhauer calls for a few words of special criticism. He bids us think of the alternation of life and death as a ceaseless rhythm of vibrations. He supposes a being of incomparably longer life than ourselves who could, at one glance, take in the whole sweep of life on the globe. Individual lives would pass so quickly before him that they would fuse with those that follow, as a stick twirled round presents a continuous circle, or as a vibrating cord is seen as a spindle. He quotes from Diderot what he calls "a very remarkable, and, in its place, astonishing passage." An immense castle, over the entrance of which one reads: "I belong to no one, and I belong to everybody. You were here before you entered, and you will be here again after you have departed."

This view is richly suggestive, and might well be incorporated into an evolutionary solution of the problem of death. Its appeal is further enhanced by the fact that Schopenhauer firmly declares an organism to be the expression of will—nay, to be the will itself. But it is vitiated by a denial of true individuality. The birth of an organism, its life, and its death, are without intrinsic value or

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meaning. For, in agreement with Eastern Pantheism, he contends that everything individual passes away—is mere appearance, *Maia*, illusion. The only persisting being is that of the blindly heaving Will which embraces all.

How slight a change will bring this philoisophy into line with human aspirations and ntuitions! Once grant that centres of will are persistent, and have a share in the life and experience of their organisms, and the rhythmic alternation of life and death takes its place in a rational scheme. It becomes a means for attaining an upward curve of life; it affords stages and starting points, for the full development of conscious centres which strive towards self-realisation.

VIII

So much for death and the philosophers. It is remarkable how few have concentrated their attention on the simple fact of death. And yet it would seem that if we could understand this—link it on to the course of the cosmic process—we should go far towards solving other problems which have so consistently eclipsed it.

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PART II

WHAT SCIENCE TEACHES

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CHAPTER I

VARIOUS KINDS OF DEATH

I

THE systematic part of our enquiry opens with an appeal to science. It is to science that we look for a supply of data which must not merely be reckoned with in an attempt to solve the problem of death, but which must be incorporated in the solution. More especially shall we expect aid from the great hypothesis which is so drastically modifying almost every department of human enquiry—that of evolution. It would be strange if that which has so much to teach about the development of life on the globe should have no contribution to make in regard to that happening which so intimately conditions its development and so inexorably determines its stages.

We come to close grips with our subject if we put a fundamental question. Do the vital processes contain within themselves the seeds of their dissolution? The very form of this question implies that we shall distinguish between certain kinds of death, and determine which of them we have in view.

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II

A worm is swallowed by a bird; a sportsman shoots a stag; a mountaineer falls over a precipice; a soldier is shattered by a shell. Such instances of death present varied and abundant material for moral and philosophical discussion; but obviously they do not fall within the scope of the question just propounded. For though every living creature is liable to a violent end, the causes at work in such cases are not due to the vital processes themselves. They open up the problem of evil; but they do not affect our estimate of the function of death as such.

III

It is not, however, so clear that what is called "microbic" death should be similarly passed by. For here dissolution is set up within the organism itself. Bacteria intrude themselves into the system, poison it, clog its vessels, inflame its tissues, kill it. And yet when we come to think accurately, we see that although the processes are set up within the organism, their cause comes from outside. The fatal effect is due to an invasion—an invasion that might not have occurred—not to civil strife. The victim is not directly to

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blame. We may say that the powers of resistance or of recuperation, might have been greater, or that hygiene might have warded off the invaders. But such considerations, though of peculiar import for a wider teleology, are beside the present issue. To all intents and purposes microbic death is a violent death.

IV

What, then, is natural death, properly so-called? It is that which is due to processes taking place within the organism, as results of its own structures and the interrelations of its parts. It is of death—so called that we ask whether it is inevitable—whether the organism contains the seeds of its own dissolution.

The general conviction is on the side of its inevitability. Certain remarkable speculations, however, have of late thrown considerable doubt on prevailing notions. For many biologists the question is an open one; a section of them definitely champion the contention that there is no such thing as "natural" death, attributing dissolution to causes which are always external to the organism, or which may be counteracted. Hasty dogmatism, therefore, is dangerous.

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V

Making allowance for this element of uncertainty as to the strict inevitability of natural death, it seems safe to say that, as a matter of fact, all organisms do actually die. No, not even here are we left in peace! There are scientists who maintain that our prepossessions on this point are untenable, Weissmann, as a protagonist, challenges us to recognise that there is such a thing as potential immortality. He bids us study certain lowly forms of life in which each individual consists of a single cell. He tells us it is not fanciful to suppose that there may be, now living on the globe, creatures which came into existence in an impenetrable past—in some far-off geological epoch—and which may persist. until conditions arise rendering their continuance impossible.

What are the facts on which such startling assertions depend? Consider an amoeba. It is a good example of these one-celled organisms. When it has arrived at a certain stage of development, it divides itself into two equal parts by a process known as "fission." Each of these parts constitutes a new individual, in every respect like the individual cell. These two new individuals each in their turn divide

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into two in the same perfect fashion. And unless some violent end cuts short the career, the process is repeated interminably.

Those to whom these matters are unfamiliar may ask in what way this process differs from ordinary propagation. The query brings us to the crucial point. The fission of the parent amoeba, says Weissmann, leaves no remainder —there is no dying—there is no "corpse." The processes of waste and repair in this one-celled organism are so perfectly balanced that there is no growing old, and no natural death. Given a favourable environment, (an external condition, be it noted) in this lowly sphere of life there is potential immortality.

In working out his theory, Weissmann distinguished between one-celled and many-celled organisms, and only advanced his claim on behalf of the former. It is pointed out, however, that his case may be strengthened. For there are creatures higher in the scale, many-celled, some of considerable complexity (like many polyps and some of the worms) of which the same contention holds good. Speaking, generally however, we may take it that, from Weissmann's standpoint, death is the price paid for increase in complexity.

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VI

What, then, of those many-celled organisms which have incurred mortality through ambition to rise in the scale of life ? They are built up of cells. Between two kinds of these a vital distinction must be drawn—seed-germ cells and body cells. A garden pea, for example, springs from a seed-germ, and under favourable conditions produces another seed-germ like to that from which it sprang. These seed-germ cells have a continuous survival-power like that of the amoeba. But unlike the amoeba, they are not independent ; they are sheltered in each generation by the " body " of the parent plant. And this " body " decays and perishes. That is to say, body-cells are subject to death ; germ-cells are endowed with potential immortality. The body-cells contain the seeds of their own dissolution ; the vital processes in the germ-cells are so balanced that there is organic continuity from generation to generation.

VII

A theory so bold as this of Weissmann cannot be accepted without careful and prolonged testing. It has been criticised from many sides, and even its most fundamental dositions cannot be said as yet to be firmly

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established. Two points stand out for special notice here—one biological, the other metaphysical.

On the biological side, high authorities call in question the assumption that, in cases like that of the amoeba, there is no "corpse." Minuter observation shows (they say) that, while the greater part of the maternal substance is transmitted to the daughters, there is also an unutilised residue. In other words, there is a partial corpse. The issue thus raised is a matter for experts. But until it is decided one way or the other we are warranted in adhering to our prepossession that all organisms of every kind do actually die. Our problem retains its universal aspect.

The metaphysical point concerns the tremendously difficult problem of individuality. Suppose Weissmann to be right. Then the whole substance of the maternal cell passes into the two daughter cells. What becomes of the individuality of the mother? Is it lost? Or is it dispersed, as it were? If the first alternative be chosen, there is the death of an individual. If the second be chosen, individuality ceases to have any real significance. Potential immortality would resolve itself into a mere multiplication of a certain portion of protoplasm. Veritably a lame conclusion!

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We here come in sight of a difficulty from which a way of escape will be attempted at a later stage by way of postulating the existence of centres of the will to live which enter into partnerships and dissolve them without ever losing their individuality. It will be argued that an organism is a society, not an individual in any absolute or exclusive sense.

VIII

It is generally agreed that life consists in the maintenance of a balance between processes of waste and repair. It was observed just above that the potential immortality of the amoeba, if a fact, would argue that this balance is stable and constant in such a typical one-celled organism. This may or may not be so. At any rate this much is clear—that the destructive changes are not only as persistent as the constructive, but are as necessary to the continuance of life. Hence the parodox that death is the never-failing companion and friend of life. The event called "death" is but a special case of what is happening all along, and merely marks the moment at which the balance is finally overthrown. It follows that if we would discover a truly immortal element, no trust can be placed in the organism as such. The potential immortality of the

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amoeba, were it proved to the hilt, would not really aid us in solving the problem of death. Biology must be transcended. Psychical and spiritual factors must be brought into the reckoning.

IX

A final thought on this subject of "natural" death. All life, unicellular or other, is dependent on environment. We may for practical purposes distinguish between causes external to the organism and causes contained within itself. But ultimately existence is one vast interconnected whole. Individual organism and environment are vitally related parts of one system—dare we say, of one all-inclusive organism. Even though a cell have lived from the dawn of terrestrial life up to the present and be dowered with life-power that will carry it on into an indeterminate future, it cannot be truly immortal. For the sun, the source of organic life, is a dying fire. A time will come when no cell can exist upon our globe. And so our problem again passes beyond the range of physical science. An organism may die. But what of the will-forces which build it up? Is there not something within the conscious will-centre which each of us knows as himself, an intuition which cannot be ignored —*Non omnis moriar?*

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Chapter II

SENESCENCE

I

Death, then, is an event which marks the point at which the vital unity of an organism is disturbed beyond recovery. In our own case, "natural death" is the last step in a long and gradual process of decay. After a period of full activity, our bodies enter on a phase in which the vital powers begin to fail, sink lower and lower until they flicker and finally fail. Our knowledge of this ageing phase is still imperfect; indeed it is only quite recently that it has been the subject of really scientific enquiry, and its causes are still a matter of vigorous dispute. Enough, however has been learnt to show that, if natural death is to be understood, there must be a fuller knowledge of senescence.

II

Is it a universal law for organisms that they shall grow old? It would not seem to be so; for, broadly speaking, as we descend the scale, there are fewer and fewer changes of the kind

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we associate with senile decay. Watch the gradual failure of vital activities in a favourite dog. It loses little by little its spring and vivacity ; its teeth become worn ; its eyes dim ; its hearing dull. It may still wag its tail when invited for a walk, but the semblance of joy is pitiful in its weakness. It is manifestly slowly dying ; there is something going on throughout the whole organism which makes its end palpably certain. A similar series of changes may be observed, with minor characteristic differences, among the higher animals generally. But lower down the scale, as Metchnikoff remarks, the differences multiply rapidly. The old age of fishes, for instance, presents few signs that we can recognise, though there are doubtless changes which have a like trend. Among the corals and sponges they are altogether lost. And at the bottom of the scale, it is possible (as we have seen) to argue that there is no death at all.

A seeming exception is afforded by the vegetable world. The bud is wooed by the sunshine and the breezes of the spring ; autumn brings decay and death. The parallelism with the course of human life is one on which the poets have not been slow to seize, and one to which it is hard not to accord a measure of real applicability.

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Perhaps we have not sufficiently recognised that the higher forms of vegetable life have a share in the joys and sorrows of existence. Wordsworth declared it was his creed that "every flower enjoys the air it breathes." Is that simply "poetry?" Be that as it may, the life of a man and the life of a tree, though often compared, are so far removed from one another that helpful parallels are difficult. Still the fact remains that both have a phase of waning activity; both gradually decay and die.

A comprehensive glance over the whole field of living organisms unmistakably reveals a decline in marks of old age as we descend the scale. The fact is suggestive. It leads us to ask why the life periods of various organisms should vary so widely.

III

Man, being the highest organism, shows most plainly the outward and visible signs of declining vitality. There is the tendency to stoop, caused not so much by curvature of the vertebral column as by the hardening of the softer cartilages into bone; His column is shortened. There is shrinkage of the tissues; the round suppleness of youth departs; the face wrinkles; the eyes sink; the muscles

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fail and are less under control ; the gait and the speech are slow. The heart is enlarged and, singularly enough, beats more rapidly. Alas ! It is nature's effort to atone for loss of elasticity in the blood vessels which are being gradually clogged and hardened. The brain, which had been already losing weight, loses it more quickly and works less effectively ; new ideas are harder to grasp ; old ideas become more imperious. The end of these things is an atrophy of the functions which must result in a final break-down. It may be doubtful which of the organs will first cease to do its work—heart, or lungs, or brain ; but whichever it is, the end is inevitable.

IV

Does the mind age with the body ? This is a delicate and far-reaching question. There are certain favoured individuals like Goethe, whose mental powers maintain their vigour to the last. But the conditions of civilised life are so highly artificial that it is almost impossible to know what would happen if nature had her way. Certainly cases of continued mental alertness warn against precipitate conclusions. They have a curious side-light thrown upon them by such phenomena as the calling up of old memories in

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hypnosis,or their sudden awakening just before death; in the flaming up of a mind to vivid activity under the stimulus of excitement. Indeed there are many evidences in favour of Bergson's contention that the true memory never forgets. The mental faculties appear to be dormant rather than extinct.

On the other hand, there is much that argues a real weakening of the mind. In senile decay there is not merely a dulling of the senses, but a failing of the mental processes. Hopes and fears, aversions and desires, receptive and reasoning powers—all alike show signs of diminishing keenness and flexibility. Let Montaigne give us an honest account of what the coming of old age meant to him. "I have grown a great many years older since my last publication, but I doubt whether I have grown an inch the wiser. I, at this moment, and I, as I was then, are certainly two different persons; but which is the better I am not in the least able to say. It were a fine thing to grow old if we were always moving in the direction of improvement; but it is a drunken, tottering, unsteady, awkward motion, like reeds which the wind bends to and fro at its will."

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V

Yes, the question is delicate and far-reaching. It involves the controversies as to the connection between body and mind; it expands into speculations about the existence and nature of the soul. It suggests the analogy of an instrument on which a musician plays —imperfections in the instrument may lead to a mistaken idea that the performer is losing his power and skill; whereas it may be that the instrument is becoming imperfect while the performer's intellect and inspiration may be unimpaired. In any case, an adequate explanation of senescence must account for the apparent contradictoriness of the data. The oppositions cannot be dissolved unless there is some sort of distinction drawn between the organism and the conscious centre, or centres, that build it up.

VI

Another question presents itself. Is senescence inevitable? In the past, men have striven hard to discover some potent charm, some life-giving elixir, which would bestow the gift of eternal youth. In vain! In the present, there are men of science who incline to look on old age as a disease--and if a disease, then curable. It is hazardous to

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dogmatise. For who shall set bounds to man's command over his physical environment? It must be confessed, however, that it will be a stupendous task to conquer death. Even science tends to show that it is something more than a disease—that it is an inseparable companion of organic life in every stage, coeval with its rise, and a condition of its development. No, in spite of every effort, past and present,

> "Old age is still old age.
> It is the waning, not the crescent moon:
> The dusk of evening, not the blaze of noon."

VII

Moreover, there is the larger thought with which the last chapter concluded. Let us conceive man's power over Nature to be so augmented that he may ward off indefinitely the approach of senescence, he could not thus be rid of a term set to life. Can he hope to govern the process of the suns? His physical life must submit to the order of the Universe. He and his institutions are, from the physical standpoint, doomed to extinction. For the great world itself is doomed. A stellar system crystallises, runs its allotted course, grows old and dies. And man must share the destiny of his home.

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Chapter III

WHAT FIXES THE TERM OF LIFE?

I

Senescence, we have seen, is a gradual slowing down of organic processes. These again are results of organic changes in which waste products accumulate and clog vitally. There is consequent progressive degeneration of the organs and tissues. The losses steadily overpower the recuperative agencies and bring about physiological bankruptcy. But the process is gradual, and the terms of life vary enormously in different organisms. Can any rational account be given of the causes which fix the term of life? Certainly we should anticipate that in a world which manifests so many and so marvellous co-ordinations of its parts, on the tiniest scale as on the sublime, the average length of life for the members of any species would not be purely arbitrary, or be left to chance. The evolution hypothesis is that which has at once been the chief mover in bringing this question into prominence, and also the chief provider of materials for its answer.

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Let us straightway, then, take the evolutionary point of view. Given that there is to be an upward curve of organic life, and that this life is to be embodied in individual organisms, each of which is not capable of climbing more than the smallest section of the curve, it follows that there must be a succession of individuals. Further, since the amount of space and sustenance is exhaustible, if a generation that has played its part did not make room for its successor, the globe would soon be overcrowded and its inhabitants without food. Hence the deep truth contained in Goethe's saying, "death is Nature's device for securing much life."

III

So far, the way is clear. But now arises a complication. On the one hand, it will conduce to the welfare of a race that the individuals which compose it shall be young; because it is the young that have uninjured organisms, dowered with vigour and vitality. The longer they live, the less perfect will they be, the less equal to their task. On the other hand, the parents must live long enough to secure for their progeny, both as regards number and ability, a sufficient chance of surviving. These requirements are antagon-

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istic, the one to the other, and yet each must assert itself. The average of life in any species will be the resultant of the clashing forces thus generated. Weissmann, again, has been the champion of this evolutionary explanation. He maintains that the average in each case is that which affords "the most favourable conditions for the existence of as large a number as possible of vigorous individuals at the same time."

IV

Doubtless this explanation carries us a long way. We must once more distinguish, however, between violent, microbic, and natural death. If there be such a thing as genuinely "natural" death, the play of evolutionary forces would have but little direct influence in determining its date. For in all stages lower than man, the weakness of old age would in itself render the struggle for existence a hopeless one. Even the king of beasts, the lion, would have to yield to external enemies, microbic, or other, which in his days of vigour he could inspire with fear or overcome. And thus the number of natural years is practically an unknown quantity. The necessity for this limitation is likewise suggested in the case of those ancient trees which have lived through a

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thousand, possibly thousands of years. Their environment has been exceptionally favourable, but not perfect; and even in their case, therefore, the end, though long postponed, is not a wholly natural one; it is partly due to ravages of insects and to catastrophies of storm or season.

Considerations such as these have afforded ground for criticism of Weissmann's evolutionary explanation of age limits. But if we are not emphasising the distinction between the different kinds of death—if we only take account of the actual deaths however caused—the criticism loses its force. For it may be fairly argued that there is in view, not the age-limit of an individual life, nor the inherent possibilities of the organism as such, but the average age attained by the individuals of a species under the totality of the conditions, internal and external. Unfortunately such an extension of the argument, though legitimate, does not serve the present purpose. For we are in search of the causes that fix the "natural" age-limit of an organism.

V

Let us return for a moment to Weissmann's distinction between germ-cells and body-cells.

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The former directly ensure the continuance of the species; the latter build up a body for their protection and sustenance. The germ-cells are dowered with perennial youth; the body-cells perish when their work is done. Nature has no further use for them, and therefore dispenses with them. Such is a seductive explanation of old age and dissolution founded on Weissmann's main doctrine—his clean-cut distinction between germ-cells and body-cells. The body dies when its reproductive work is accomplished.

In gauging the value of this theory, a previous question may be raised. Is the distinction as sharp cut as Weissmann would have us believe? High authorities warn us against accepting it. Thus a French biologist, M. Delage, tells us that "the minutest observation has never shown in budding cells or eggs the setting apart of anything in their substance which is transmitted intact, while the rest undergoes only a moderate differentiation." And again, "We ought to admit that the germ cells are not essentially distinct from the body-cells, that they are only egg-cells a little modified, and capable of finding their primitive form by a process of evolution." That is to say, each germ-cell has to make a new beginning in just the same way as the body

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cells, is subject to the same kind of conditions, and is equally a product of individual development. The laws of organic structure are thus the same throughout.

VI

However these points may be ultimately decided, it is plain that biologists have not, up to the present, agreed upon the causes of the death of an organism by distinguishing between germ-cells and body cells. And the doubts are strengthened by the failure, already noted, to prove that the single-celled organisms are really potentially immortal. But does this dispose of the contention that there is a connection between the duration of life of the individual and the maintenance of the species? To affirm this would, of course, be indefensible. Weissmann's theory covers only part of the ground. Even though it be fully granted, however, that the connection is real and vitally operative, it does not follow that it is the only cause at work, or that its action is unvarying throughout the course of organic evolution. Let us briefly survey the main facts.

Beginning at the bottom of the scale, we find the one-celled organisms. In their case, the parent cell ceases to exist simultaneously

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with the achievement of reproduction. They present, therefore, a perfect case of connection between the term set to the life of the individual and the conditions for the continuance of the species. There are instances among the many-celled organisms comparatively high in the scale where the death of the parents follows almost immediately after the existence of the next generation is secured. Against these have to be set such instances as that of the elephant, which may live for a couple of centuries, and enjoy a career that is largely independent of racial interests. In fact, it may be said of the higher organisms generally that they live many years after their reproductive powers have ceased. How can it be denied that the emergence of this independent longevity, and its increase as organic development advances, argues a tendency in nature towards more and more complex individualisation ? There is a growing emphasis on the value of the single life for its own sake. And we may further remark that the emphasis is in rough proportion to the development of the intellectual powers ; since it is these that make it possible to satisfy individual desires freed from the control of pure instinct.

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VII

This individualising tendency is naturally most clearly revealed in man, the highest of the organisms. The preponderance of his brain power has placed an enormous gap between him and the animals nearest to him in the scale. Hence the possibility of social tradition in which experience is stored, and the protection afforded by social groups. As civilisation advances, the individual man is enabled to extend ever more widely his field for caprice and choice, and at last to assert himself so effectively that his interests and conduct, so far from being a benefit to the community, are not seldom at variance with it.

The resulting disturbance of the purely racial interests leads us to conclude that nature has other ends in view than mere preservation of species, and that the "natural" term of life is by no means in simple and direct connection with the reproductive activities. "Three score years and ten" was the limit assigned by men of old time, perchance extended with increase of "labour and sorrow" to "four score years." Modern authorities assure us that wholesome living, self-restraint, and science should extend this term to a century if given fair play. Sir James Crichton

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Browne commits himself to the statement that "every man is entitled to his century and every woman to a century and a little over, for women live longer than men. Every child should be brought up impressed with the obligation of living to a hundred, and should be taught how to avoid the irregularities that tend to frustrate this laudable ambition."

Such advice as this shows how far we have travelled from the amoeba! Instead of regarding the interests of the race as the supreme and sole determiners of our life period, we are exhorted to give our organisms a fair chance of developing potentialities that have a preponderantly individualistic bearing. We are thus compelled to pass on from purely biological considerations. The causes and teleology of old age and death are not to be found ultimately in nature's care for the species. They lie deeper in the very nature and constitution of the organism, in its aspect as a means for attaining a fuller satisfaction of the will-to-live.

VIII

Let a still deeper thought conclude this chapter. Tennyson protests—

> "Are God and Nature then at strife
> That Nature lends such evil dreams?

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So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life."

It has already been shown that this protest has less and less ground as organic evolution advances. There is a further question, however. Have we a right to equate, as it were, the organism and the true individual? An organism is, of course, an individual in a very real sense. But what if it be a complex individual, built up by an assembly, or society, of will-centres, as a hive is constructed by a swarm of bees? If this suggestion be entertained, new possibilities open out. The continuance of a species would then be viewed as a succession of organisms which are composite temporary partnerships, entered into for the mutual advantages of the constituent members. Its apparent opposition to the individual would disappear. Such is the suggestion that is to be developed as the main thesis of this essay.

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Chapter IV

EFFECTS OF GROWTH AND COMPLEXITY

I

It has now been sufficiently shown that the evidence available does not justify the conclusion that organisms of any kind can escape dissolution. It has also been shown that the attempt to account for senescence and death on evolutionary principles, while it is of extreme value up to a certain point, cannot take us far enough. Are there other suggestions from the side of science which may supply the deficiencies ?

II

Some biologists have laid stress on the rapid decrease in the rate of growth of an organism. The human embryo, for instance, is microscopic in its earliest stage. The infant, at the time of birth, is some three or four million times bigger. The adult is only some sixteen times bigger than the infant. Here is a remarkable decrease—one of millions slowing down in a few months to tens in twenty

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years! How is it to be accounted for? The cause must be sought in the behaviour of the cells. In the early stages they divide with enormous vitality. As the organism develops they enter into various relations with each other, and have to subordinate their individual behaviour to the good of the whole. Each becomes a member of a group, and enters on the performance of some specialised function; and the more complex the organism becomes, the greater is the need for, and the degree of specialisation. The result is that increasing numbers of them have to cease multiplying altogether, being condemned to serve the needs of others. Any text book on physiology will supply abundant material for realising how numerous, diverse, and complex are the interdependencies in the parts of a human body. Each of these is only gained by sacrifice of the reproductive powers of the cells concerned.

III

True it is that organisms possess, in varying measure, regenerative powers which are not seldom astounding in their capacity for repairing losses and injuries in organs and tissues. In certain of the lower species, as the worms, severed parts, if not too small, can

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grow into complete organisms. Higher in the scale, salamanders and newts can replace tails and entire limbs. Such phenomena prove that the reproductive capacity may sometimes be dormant only, and may revive when need arises. But they do not affect the general rule that increasing complexity of structure and parts takes its toll in reducing remedial capacity. In the highest organisms this reproductive power is not wholly lost. Even so important an organ as the liver may be partially reconstructed. Nevertheless the power is comparatively inconsiderable. Nerve tissue is practically irrecoverable—the result of its extreme specialisation.

Account must also be taken of a further result of growing complexity. With few exceptions and those not complete, the higher the organism, the more necessity there is for unresting labour in the vital organs. The lowlier species have their periods of depression; they retire, as it were, within themselves to recuperate their powers, after the analogy of the hibernating animals. Ordinary sleep is an inadequate substitute. Let it cost what it may, certain functions must be increasingly maintained if premature death is to be avoided. The heart must drive the blood through the organism to keep it in working

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order and to repair losses. The brain must retain some forms of its activity, as is evidenced in consciousness by dreams. The lungs must keep up their rhythmic rise and fall. Here is another drain on the resources of the cells—another toll levied for increase in complexity.

IV

It cannot be wondered at that when the cells are submitted to conditions so far removed from those in which their reproductive powers are quite free to act (as in the case of one-celled organisms) the balances that render life possible are seriously disturbed. Co-operation brings its untold gains; it also involves subordination and repression. The gain is greater than the loss; but the loss is there.

The nerve tissue, as just stated, is the most highly specialised, and injuries to it are practically irremediable. It would seem to follow, therefore, that the harmful results of complexity would in this case be most pronounced. Muhlmann devoted himself to the line of research thus suggested, and his conclusions have secured much attention. He discovered that nerve tissue is undergoing a slow and continuous alteration of substance from the earliest years to the end of life. If a start is made with the third year of

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an infant, they present themselves, even at that early stage, a small number of coloured granulations. These increase in number as the years pass, and in old age occupy almost the whole cell. The invasion takes place throughout the whole nervous system, and is thus seen to be a result of general conditions. Now the more these granulations increase, the less becomes the power of growth and multiplication possessed by the cells; and at last it ceases completely. What is the inference? Life itself manufactures, so to speak, that which destroys it. And though it would be going too far to argue that these and similar changes are the ultimate cause of death, it is justifiable to see in them a general tendency in the organism to bring about its own destruction.

V

It is plain from what has preceded that although specialisation has a repressive influence on the natural vitality of the cells, it has its varying degrees of action. Some parts of the organism suffer less than others. This fact comes out clearly in what happens at death. In the popular mind, the death of an organism takes place at a definite time as a definite event. There is sufficient truth in

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this notion to make it adequate for all the purposes of practical affairs. But, as usual, closer examination shows that things are not so simple as they seem, and that corrections and reservations are necessary.

What of the grains of wheat which are said to have lain for centuries in the dark recesses of an Egyptian tomb ? Brought to the light and planted in the soil, they recovered and shot up into full bearing of blade and ear. If it be objected that this resuscitation is not sufficiently attested, we can fall back on the case of the thread worms which, after being dried and motionless for years, came to life again. Startling examples of such survival-power after the cessation of vital functions might easily be multiplied. Even so complex an organism as the human body, in which interdependence reigns so fully, is not incapable of such revivals. Many are brought to life again after drowning. Cataleptic trances, so deep that they have deceived skilled practitioners, have loosed their grip.

Such phenomena are only exceptional instances of a much wider class. The fact is that the whole organism never dies all at once and in every part. Though the vital unity may be overthrown to a degree that would involve death were favourable circumstances not to

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intervene, some of the parts may retain sufficient vitality to restore the balance when they have a chance of asserting themselves. An organism, then, does not die all at once ; its individual cells, tissues and organs have each their respective measures of independence—their varying stock of initiative.

VI

This subject will be resumed in fuller detail when the theory is discussed that the organism is not to be viewed as a single life, but as a combination of lives, and that its death may be likened to the disruption of a State or the disbanding of an army. The conclusion here reached is this. So far as scientific discovery lends aid, it leads us to regard "natural" death as inevitable, because the vital processes themselves, as they grow in complexity, compass their own destruction. The organism as a whole is in conflict with its parts, and its parts with one another, because the multitudinous requirements of the complex cannot all find satisfaction. The balance is too delicate to be maintained.

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Chapter V

WHAT REMAINS?

I

"Who hath the oracles of his ashes?" So meditates Sir Thomas Browne in his Hydriotaphia. When once the power which unites into a living whole the parts of an organism has lost its sway, the structure seems to sink into the world of what is often blindly called "dead matter." Its particles are scattered to play their ever-changing myriad *rôles* in those transformations through which the cosmic energy is ever passing. The well-nigh miraculous complexity of the structure cannot save it. This holds good of every tissue, every cell —true of the busy brain no less than of the comparatively inert matter of the skeleton. Indeed, the more exalted the function, the speedier the dissolution. Whether the ultimate constituents preserve any traces of the wondrous experiences through which they pass is a problem of far-reaching significance. It will reappear at a later stage.

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II

The range of facts now to engage attention is of prime importance for our purpose. Its central principle is this, that the dissolution and dispersion of the parts of an organism at death are but what the mathematician might call " a limiting case " of a general rule. The life processes all along are essentially of the same kind, only that the dissolution is not on a scale to be fatal to the unity of the organism.

The popular notion of a living body is that of a definite structure, of a practically fixed constitution—not much different from a statuary representation of it, save that it is more complex and has within it the principles of life. The reality, of course, is very different. There is constant and all-pervading change —otherwise there could not be life. Within a moderate term of years every particle of the body may be new material. The rate of change varies—a year, a day, an hour, a minute, a second——but is always going on. The inferences from these facts, if faithfully followed, will often be strange, and at times subversive of many accepted ideas ; but those who are in search of truth will not shirk them.

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III

The body, then, save in respect of a certain steadiness in mass and contour, is almost the antithesis of a statue. It is far more like to a jet of burning gas. The flame has a certain form, and to ordinary view seems to be composed of a certain fixed substance. In reality it is maintained by a constant stream of particles which are in a state of interaction known as combustion. There is much more than analogy in this comparison. For in the body and in the flame there is an oxydising of the materials, though in the body the combustion is much slower. The main point, however, is that in both cases there is a continual change of materials, and that this change is a condition of the continuance of the form.

A man's body is never the same at two consecutive moments. That is to say, there is no fixed set of materials which he can regard as peculiarly and definitely constituting his organism. It is only by a useful fiction that we speak of the body as an object clearly marked off from the world of matter around it. When shall we say that the air in a man's lungs becomes part of his body? At what stage of the digestive processes shall we assert

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that the food ceases to be food? What of the waste products, glandular and other? No, the organism is linked on, by a graduated series of assimilations and rejections, to its external environment. Its apparent independence and separateness are an illusion.

IV

In view of these facts, materialists argue that the dissolution of an organism carries with it that of the individual life which it conditioned—that Death is totally and absolutely final. The matter of which the organism is built up continues, after death, to form a part of the material universe. On this, the materialist is inclined to lay undue stress; for the doctrine of the conservation of matter, and even that of the conservation of energy, have received some hard knocks of late. Beyond this, however, he refuses to advance. He maintains that along with the break-up of the particular combination which constitutes the organism, there goes that of the life-centre, the consciousness, and all that is implied in individuality. Without further discussion it will be assumed that such crude dogmatism has had its day. There are elements in our experience which demand subtler treatment. The world of

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thought is passing into a phase more receptive of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual claims of the facts of life as it is actually lived.

Nevertheless, a counter-dogmatism will not suffice for those who strive towards a reasonable faith, and who feel that if there is a fuller truth we should not despair of apprehending it. Let us ask, then, how we may best conceive of what remains over and above the "materials" when an organism is dissolved. We must be careful not to lose sight of our special problem in embarking on such a sea of controversy.

V

The most obvious thing to say when an organism has died is that the "life" has left it. Is life, then, something apart from the organism?—something that when it has for a season moulded and possessed a physical structure, leaves it, itself remaining intact? Sir Oliver Lodge holds it to be legitimate to maintain such a view—to liken the happenings to the charging and discharging of an electrical conductor. Given a certain set of conditions, the electricity comes to a particular piece of matter; under altered conditions, it deserts it. The electricity itself simply changes its location. The idea is tempting; but it has serious weaknesses. To sustain it, it would

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have to be shown that electricity is something apart from matter ; but there is a strong trend towards thinking that matter is itself electricity ! Sir Oliver does not insist on the validity of this conception ; he only urges its possibility by way of alternative to the materialists' view. As an *ad hominem* argument it has its value. But its implications, after all, are not much more fundamentally satisfying than the view that only matter and force persist. What is lacking is a basis for the fact of individual will and consciousness.

Moreover, anything like a sharp line drawn between life and matter involves a dualism which should not be endured unless the evidence for it is overpowering. The difficulties in determining what remains after the dissolution of an organism are admittedly immense. But we should not therefore be tempted to adopt superficial solutions, or to premature cutting of Gordian knots. The core of the problem seems to consist in distinguishing between the life of an organism as a complex, and the life of the component centres of the will-to-live. If this distinction be admitted as valid, then the dissolution of the complex does not necessarily carry with it that of the components.

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VI

Does consciousness remain ? The materialist urges that consciousness is " secreted " by the brain ! This is assuredly to put the cart before the horse. For it is only by the play of consciousness that there can be knowledge of the brain. Consciousness is not an object among objects, but an awareness of objects. An affirmation that we can examine the conditions under which the brain does its work is one thing ; an affirmation that brain processes examine brains is quite another. Apply this to our special problem. When an organism is dissolved into its material particles, conscious beings can observe the happenings. But has this dissolution anything to do with the existence and persistence of the consciousness which that organism conditioned ? It may be freely granted that the contents of the consciousness so conditioned are changed—the particular kind of experience gained through the organism is no longer possible. But what of the consciousness itself ? That is a totally different question. It belongs to another sphere than that of material happenings, and must receive due consideration on its own behalf.

It would seem that here again, as in the case

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of life, the simplest solution lies in the distinction between an organism as a composite individual and the component centres which build it up. On this supposition, death brings with it the dissolution of a partnership ; but does not necessarily imply that of the partners. Merely to insist on the continuance of consciousness is but a refinement of the materialistic doctrine. At death, the particular portion of it manifested in an organism would be dissipated—absorbed into a formless ocean. What we need, to satisfy the requirements of experience fairly interpreted, is the existence of centres of consciousness—definite individuals who know that they know.

The dualistic theory of soul and body is an attempt to meet this requirement. But, as has been above contended, it provides no rational explanation of why the soul has a body, and it runs counter to the whole trend of modern science which repudiates a violent severing of the world into water-tight compartments. Is it not possible to combine the fundamental aim of the " soul " doctrine with that of the scientist ? The monadology to be expounded directly is an attempt at answering this question.

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Chapter VI

THE SPIRITUAL BODY

I

A convenient stepping-stone to the consideration of the view mentioned at the close of the last chapter is found in a speculation based on recent teachings concerning the ether of space. It is not necessary to give here any extended account of the scientific aspects of the ether, nor of the reasons which have practically compelled belief in its existence. Suffice it here to say that it is postulated as a wondrously self-contradictory mother-stuff. In its "free" state, it is credited with properties which remove it out of the category of matter; and yet in its "strained" state, it is held to constitute matter. Without further detail, let us see how it bears on the question of "What remains?"

II

The salient point is this. On the one hand, under certain conditions, the ether is material, and furnishes the substance of the physical

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universe. It therefore furnishes the substance of organisms. On the other hand, it passes out of the range of scientific apparatus and method. It is all-pervading ; but it lacks the mark by which we recognise matter ; it is imponderable. It thus presents itself as a kind of mediator between the two worlds of the material and the immaterial. It constitutes a sort of bridge between them.

The ether furnishes, as was said, the substance of our organisms, and their dissolution is in the sphere of its material forms. But should the connection of this ether with the phenomena of life be limited to these material forms ? Is it not natural to expect that there will be links with the immaterial state of the imponderable all-pervading mother-stuff ? If this possibility be granted, a new field for speculation extends before us.

III

A prompting in this direction is given by a speculation due to Lord Kelvin. He entertained the notion that, among other marvellous properties, the ether possesses that of being a perfect fluid. And he pointed out, that on this supposition, a vortex set up in it would be indestructible. Now in the course of this

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enquiry there have been frequent suggestions in regard to the existence of persistent centres. Bring these two speculations together. Then a vortex in ether may be looked upon as providing a quasi-physical basis for a persistent will-centre. Round such a centre would be built up a complex organism. Call this centre the "embryo," and we are in line with what actually takes place when a microscopic germ acts as a starting point for growth. The difference between the supposed vortex centre which would be really simple, and the biological embryo which is exceedingly complex, does not affect the issue raised.

Not only would a quasi-physical basis be thus provided for the persistence of the ultimate embryo, but the further advantage would be secured of a ground for maintaining its essentially psychical or spiritual nature. For the ether, as was pointed out, has its immaterial side, and opens a door into a world of higher potentialities in which the categories of physical science are transcended.

Under this supposition the death of an organism would not imply that of the ether-embryo—the vortex in a perfect fluid. It would be free to act as a centre for new organisms in new environments.

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IV

No claim to validity is here made on behalf of this vortex speculation. There may be something in it or there may not. But in any case it is certain that organisms are in direct communication with the ocean of ether, and are subjected to the stresses and strains thus imposed. It is also certain that they in their turn react upon the ether. Who shall say how much is involved in these facts ?

In view of them there are some who maintain that the material organism presented to our senses does not represent the complete "body." These thinkers are not mystics soaring into realms of irresponsible phantasies ; they rank among the most learned and scientific of our time. A pioneer in this line of speculation was the Swiss naturalist, Bonnet. He held that during life we are building up an ethereal body, and that what we see is only part of a larger whole. A present-day thinker, Fawcett, suggests that this ethereal body is continually storing up experience ; and that when the grosser part dies, the Ego finds a new centre in the more subtle part which floats away like a cloud from a mountain top.

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V

If we try to imagine the processes which would condition the development of an ethereal body, we may recur to the analogy of the embryo. The germ with which a material organism starts is prepared and nourished as part of the organism of the parent. There is between parent and offspring a vital knitting up of tissues and an interchange of vital activities, until such time as the various organs are matured and able to play their part independently in a freer stage of existence. May we not conceive that the etherial body has its fœtal stage, and that the material body acts as a kind of placenta for its development? In the childhood stage of the material organism, the ethereal body would be immature; it would develop as life went on, being more especially influenced by the growth of the brain. When the natural term of the material body was reached, death would be the occasion of a second birth. The subtler body would be set free for a higher and more independent career.

VI

It goes without saying that this speculation is woefully incomplete. But it may be claimed for it that it is not in contradiction to any

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accepted teachings of science. Indeed, science may be said to be groping its way towards it. Nor is there anything in it that is contradictory of the philosophy on the study of which we are about to enter.

From the Christian standpoint it should be welcome. For it is closely akin to St. Paul's doctrine of the "spiritual body." "There is a natural body (says the Apostle) and there is a spiritual body." The one is as truly an outcome of the other as the plant from the seed. The progress from the one to the other is in an ordered scheme of development—"first that which is natural, then that which is spiritual." On every count, therefore the conception of an ethereal body is worthy of respectful recognition.

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PART III

MONADOLOGY

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Chapter I

THE ORGANISM AS A COMPLEX UNITY

I

Science has rendered splendid service in pointing the way to a rational solution of the problem of death. It has justified Goethe's saying that "death is Nature's device to secure more life." That is to say, it has enabled us to see that what was held to be an alien intruder on the domain of life has a rightful place there and a definite function. We are started on the route. But just when it begins to be intensely interesting and hopeful, the guidance of science fails us. The mere brute fact—that there is such a thing as organic evolution, taken in the isolated fashion required by scientific methods, cannot satisfy us. And if no further guidance were available, we should after all be brought to acquiesce in Max Nordan's conclusion. "There is no justification for taking maturity as the archetypal condition. All life moves on, through bloom and maturity alike, towards death. It is as correct to maintain,

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as Claude Bernard does without hesitation, that the goal of all life is death; that the archetype towards which every living thing is developing, which it is striving to realise, is the senile being who dies and decomposes with the exhaustion of his vital forces."

II

Science cannot, in loyalty to its own aims, venture beyond the bounds of verifiable happenings. But neither can it forbid others to supplement its labours by researches in a wider field. Behind and above its pronouncements there is the appeal to human experience in its entirety. The sweep of racial intuitions bursts through the barriers that positivists would fain build in mid-stream to check spiritual interpretations and the indulgence of the larger hope. The vitalists declare life to be something more than the play of physical and chemical forces. The philosophers emphasise the rational elements in experience. The moralists draw out the implications of the moral law. The religious thinkers dwell on the emotional demands of man's nature and the claims of the ideal. Yes experience is indefinitely fuller and richer than science; and those who would attempt to solve the problem of death must take account

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of this fulness and richness if they would satisfy the great heart of humanity, as well as its reason.

III

It has been several times contended, in the course of what has preceded, that many of the clashings in the views held concerning the function and meaning of death arise from equating, as it were, the single organism and the single centre of the will-to-live. Let us make a beginning, therefore, in this philosophical section, by asking whether an organism does in reality possess the complete and thorough-going unity that would thus be expected.

All must agree that an organism is a very complex unity. Confining ourselves for the sake of clearness to the higher animals, there is a manifest correlation of differing parts—the limbs, the heart, the lungs, the brain, and the rest. The medical man carries this differentiation very far; the specialist in physiology is still more minute in his dissections. The chemist comes on the scene and analyses the constituents of the living matter, working downwards to the atoms of the elements found therein; the physicist follows and shows that the atoms themselves

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are structures built up out of yet finer materials. No hard and fast line can be drawn between the results of these successive labours. There is insensible transition throughout. Undoubtedly there is a very real bond of unity which makes an organism an individual whole; but this unity is no less undoubtedly compatible with a real individuality of its parts.

IV

Consider an instance of the correlations of these parts—that of the associated movements connected with speech and writing. You ask a man what is his name. He answers, "John." That is to say, the total organism responds by pronouncing that sound. For ordinary purposes we do not go further in accounting for the spoken word. The actual process, however, is a complex one. The sound of the question acted upon an auditory nerve-centre; and this, in turn stimulated the nerve-centres of the speech mechanism; the sound of the answer is produced. If the question be written on a piece of paper, the optic nerve takes in the impressions of black on white, and the sight-centre stimulates the speech-centre, with the same result.

Now so long as the various connections work

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smoothly, it suffices to say, "The man has told me his name." But suppose something goes wrong. Say that the man has a particular kind of brain disease which affects the connection between the hearing-centre and the speech-centre. Then, if he be asked his name, he cannot answer. He has heard the sound of the question and has interpreted it rightly. But the ear-centre does not stimulate the speech-centre, and the sound "John" is not produced, though the ability to pronounce the word is unimpaired. Ask the man to write his name, and he will straightway give you the written characters. That is to say, the hearing-centres are connected up with the centres that control the muscular movements for forming the letters, though they are out of gear with the speech-centres.

This example sets in clear light the corporate character of an organism. It is one of an innumerable variety of interrelations between parts which are at once the delight and the despair of an enthusiastic physiologist. It enables us to appreciate that excellent definition of an organism based on its composite unity—an individual in which the parts exist for the sake of the whole and the whole for the sake of the parts.

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V

The varying degrees of independence enjoyed by the parts will be noted in due course. At present we keep to the simple fact of complex unity and of the principle which underlies it. At a very early date the broad facts had impressed themselves on the minds of thinkers. They observed, and reasoned from, the interdependent combination of limbs and organs in a human body. Plato and Aristotle made free use of the ideas suggested, and incorporated them into their theories of the State. Hobbes evolved his Leviathan, and Herbert Spencer his organic sociology. St. Paul, moving on a more mystical plane told the members of the Church that the relations between them were such as to give them the unity of a living organism which he called "the body of Christ." The underlying principle, then, is one capable of wide applications. It can be recognised wherever there is a combination of individuals, human, sub-human, or super-human such that the parts exist for the sake of the whole and the whole for the sake of the parts.

VI

It is easy to become fanciful, or prosaically detailed, in tracing the analogies, or likenesses, between organisms, strictly so called, and

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social groups; but the fear of error should not blind us to the evidence for their essential truth. It is helpful, in this regard, to study the community aspects of such an interrelated complex unity as is seen in a hive of bees. Each bee is admittedly an individual, and has no small measure of independence. The worker goes in search of honey, decides on directions, distance to be traversed, flowers to be visited and so forth. And yet this worker is dependent on the community in such wise that it cannot live long if separated from it. There are some influences operating which make it more definitely "a member of a body" than is, for example a "solitary wasp." This fact, however, is but a very small bit of the evidence. Think of the ordering of the hive. How many and manifold are the tasks which have to be performed; and yet they are carried out with almost unfailing nicety and precision. There is the architecture of the home; the repair of it; the feeding of the queen and the larvæ; the cleaning of the galleries, and the cooling of them by fanning of wings at the entrance in hot weather; the secreting of wax; the provision for the sending forth of a new colony, and all the endless variety of detail described for us by observers of bee-life.

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III

Now carry this analogy, or parallel, of the general and his army a further stage. If the army is disbanded, the co-ordination required for united action disappears. The general ceases to be its commanding officer, and so loses those specialised powers which his relationship to the army had given him. But he does not on that account cease to exist as a conscious centre; nor do the units of his army lose their individuality. Each member of the disbanded association is free to enter into such other groupings as desires and circumstances may permit.

Apply this to the death of a human body. The particular bond that made it a co-ordinate whole is dissolved. The dominant centre no longer has his army to command. The other centres are freed from the particular restraint which membership of that body had entailed. But this does not imply that the dominant centre ceases to exist, or that the subordinate centres lose their individuality. The monads concerned are free to enter into such fresh combinations as desire and environment may permit. Granted the monadistic standpoint, the parallel is, in all essentials, complete and illuminating.

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deeper thought disposes of the difficulty. Psychical and spiritual influences are not so much in bondage to space as is popularly supposed—as witness the admission of telepathy to the rank of scientifically valid phenomena. Nor, indeed, are physical influences dependent on contact. Atoms do not touch one another. And the constituents of the atom are said to be as far apart, relatively as the size, as the bodies composing our solar system. We need not be too greatly perturbed, then, because individual bees are apart in space. The total psychic influences of the hive blend into a higher unity.

VII

We find, therefore, that both below men, in the case of the bees, and beyond the individual man, as in the case of a social group or nation, we have evidence that an individual may be built up out of individuals. And, with reference to our special problem, we infer analogically and otherwise, that an organism may not merely be complex, but may be constituted by peculiar relations between true individuals which are ultimate centres of the will-to-live.

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Chapter II

THE INDIVIDUAL CENTRES

I

When dealing with the complexity of an organism, the analysis of the constituent parts was carried down to the atoms and the yet smaller materials which build up the atoms. How far will future discovery go in discerning further compositeness? How far should speculation go? It matters not so long as there be postulated the existence of some ultimate constituent—some final unit, such as Lord Kelvin's vortex in ether. Infinite divisibility is a mathematical fiction; physical research affords no ground for transferring it to the world of fact.

Assuming, then, that there are ultimate units, these would be the bricks as it were, out of which the whole material universe is built. In due order appear electrons, atoms, molecules, aggregates of elements, crystals, colloids, cells, organisms, and the whole course of organic evolution. A fundamental question for our present purpose is to determine the

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nature of these ultimate units. Are they "brute" matter, or are they psychical centres?

II

An elaboration of the argument in favour of the "psychical" view would be out of place here. The issue must be assumed. It may be pointed out, however, that, as was remarked when considering the ethereal body, the ether is a mediator between the world known to physical science and that which transcends its range. "Free" ether is an imponderable—that is to say, it is not "matter." And if, as scientists distinctly tend to hold, matter be built up out of ether, then matter is ultimately something which is not matter. If it be decided to speak of energy rather than of matter, then we have a stepping-stone to the concept of will. And having arrived at will, we gain a basis for a deeper understanding of the true nature of an organism. The ultimate units will be will-centres. And their association in organisms will be fundamentally psychical in its conditions and in its results.

This statement is sadly condensed. It might be simpler merely to have assumed its conclusion. But it is advisable to show that a rational argument can be adduced for its validity. It may further be mentioned that

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metaphysical arguments in its support are many and weighty.

III

Although the limits of this essay preclude a full discussion of the evidence for the assumption just determined on, there are certain portions which are too directly germane to our problem to be passed over. If the ultimate units of an organism be centres of the will-to-live, we should anticipate that we could trace various kinds and degrees of independent activity in the subordinate individuals and groups of individuals. The surmise receives remarkable corroboration from a host of highly significant facts. We will begin with some of those open to ordinary observation.

IV

It has been noted already that when an organism dies, the organs and tissues do not all die simultaneously. The hair and the nails live for a considerable time, and may even grow while the rest of the organism is in the process of dissolution. In such cases, the cells seem to be almost as independent as the plants are of the soil in which they flourish. A man's heart has been removed more than thirty hours after his falling a victim to a certain kind of

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fever, and has been made to beat for a considerable time. A turtle's heart so removed, will beat for days. Here we have a manifestation of independent vitality on the part of an important and complex organ. The vital unity is evidently not so complete as to effect entire subordination of the parts to the whole.

V

Far more convincing are the results of some well-known experiments on birds and dogs. If the brain be removed from a pigeon, the bird often recovers from the shock and lives for a time in its mutilated condition—even for years. But it is no longer what it was; it has become more like a living machine. What else could we expect when it has lost the organ which controls the higher activities. Still, it lives on. It sits motionless in the same place; or, if thrown into the air, flies until its wings are tired, or until it is stopped by some obstacle which it has not the sense to avoid. It shows no signs of fear; it lacks initiative. But the heart continues to beat, the lungs to breathe; the digestive processes do their work. In short, the various organic functions necessary to life are practically unimpaired.

If a dog be similarly treated, the results are similar. It becomes indifferent to its

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surroundings, and makes no response to threat or to caress. It is dumb, save that now and then it may howl for food. It is deaf, save that it may turn its head at some exceptionally loud noise. It is blind to the sights that once stimulated its emotions. And yet it is a living organism.

There is little doubt that could a human being be subjected to a like experiment, the same kind of results would follow. Indeed there have been cases of partial injury to the brain which have been the cause of unmistakable parallels. Nor can we fail to observe the healthy working of the organs in an infant before its brain has been fully developed—that is to say, before its higher centres have become operative.

VI

What is the natural inference from such phenomena? Can it be in doubt? In the higher organisms there must be centres of will and intelligence other than the brain. These centres have such a measure of independence that, even when they are deprived of the control of the chief centre, they are able to co-operate with sufficient unity to ward off the overthrow of the vital balance. The life is on a lower grade because the co-ordination is less perfect.

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Nevertheless it is life. If, when in action, an army loses its controlling staff, it has to keep itself together as best it may. Its chances of safety will depend on the efficiency and co-ordination of the subordinate authorities.

The existence of the subordinate will-centres in organisms is disguised under ordinary circumstances because while the brain is in command, the impression is produced that a single will-centre is the sole agent. It is not until abnormal conditions are brought about, by experiment or otherwise, that the composite nature of the apparent unity is revealed.

VII

That the subordinate centres retain their individuality is an inference based on many converging lines of evidence. Here is an example from another range of facts. When a man says that he is hungry, he means that he, as a unified composite individual, has a consciousness of personal discomfort. But it is not every part of his organism that feels hunger, only certain of the organs and tissues which are in need of nutriment. These hungry parts manage somehow to communicate their wants to the supreme control, and the organism acts as a unity in supplying the wants.

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How marvellous this is if we face the implications! The parts of the organism make known to a central authority their individual needs and secure attention. What is the nature of the communications thus made? This question has been debated interminably under the form of determining the connection between mind and body. The assumption made in this essay that the ultimate units are psychical renders it unnecessary to traverse those tangled paths. We are able to say that the results are attained by the intercourse of intelligent will-centres. But it is strong corroboration of the validity of this assumption to find that it effects so great a simplification of a problem which, stated in its usual form, may be declared hopeless.

Granted, that an organism is a specialised association of will-centres, they can be supposed to stimulate each other to a consciousness of their individual desires. (The grades of consciousness will vary indefinitely, from the full self-consciousness of a civilised man to the obscure capacity for feeling that can hardly be called consciousness at all.) The sensation of hunger experienced by a human being may thus be regarded as a mass-sensation, compounded of the sensations of all the parts concerned. The dominating,

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controlling centre, apprehends this mass-sensation, and communicates its decisions to the organism as a whole.

This view is strongly supported by a further analysis of what happens when a man feels hungry and takes food. The individual in command is satisfied when this food has been consumed. Not so the organs and tissues that are the really hungry parts of the organism. They are still unfed, and on their own account set up processes for the assimilation of the material provided. The consciousness of the controlling centre no longer intervenes —hardly more than if the food had been given to a hungry dog. Such separateness implies more than simple division of labour. There is an element of independence in the composite activities which suggests an army commissariat which is ultimately under the control of the commanding officer.

VIII

The evidence so far adduced has been gathered from what would be usually regarded as interactions of mind and body. Can it be supplemented if we limit ourselves to the interactions of activities more definitely psychical? Suggestive facts present themselves in abundance, more especially in the sphere of

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what is now so widely known as that of the Sub-conscious. Let us take account of a few typical examples.

Absent-mindedness may be regarded simply as lack of attention. The searching analysis of the modern psychologist, however, reveals unexpected subtleties in the seeming simplicity. The lack of attention is to be recognised as a factor; but being of a merely negative character, it cannot be taken as an explanation of phenomena which manifest the activity of psychical agencies not under the control of attention. Such, for instance, is the automatic writing executed by a hand placed on a sheet of paper while the owner of the hand is engaged in conversation or reading, and is wholly unconscious of what the hand is doing. The characters written may be meaningless; but even so they have their value as evidence for detached activity. Not seldom, however, they give sense, and even supply answers to questions previously propounded. Purposive intelligence is at work. Can such happenings be explained by anything less than the conscious guidance of some centres not at the time in communication with the dominant centre?

An extreme form of this attachment is found in case of "split personality" in which the

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Ego abdicates its pride of place, and admits to the seat of government some centre which normally is in subjection. The thread of continuous self-consciousness may or may not be lost, according to the degree of correlation preserved between the rival centres. In the classical case of Miss Beauchamp, there were three firmly established personalities, with the occasional appearance of a fourth. The originally dormant "self" regained its supremacy after a course of special treatment. Another case is that of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, recounted by Professor James. He disappeared from home, and was sought in vain. Three months after, a man calling himself A. J Brown, who had rented a small shop about six weeks previously, stocked with stationery, confectionery, fruit, and small articles, and carried on a quiet trade without attracting any particular notice, woke up in a fright, and called in the people of the house to tell him where he was. He declared himself, and proved to be, this said Rev. Ansel Bourne. He could recall nothing from the time of his leaving home, and never afterwards gained consciousness of his adventure. How can we avoid postulating the activity of some centre detached from the normal self, which imposed itself for a time as the ruler of the organism?

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IX

Have we here a key to those harrowing changes in behaviour and character which have so often induced a belief in demoniacal possession? It is at times hard, even for a modern mind, to resist this mode of explanation when some quiet and loving nature is transformed into a monster of passion or of homicidal impulse. The idea almost forces itself upon us that there is an importation of some alien agency which swamps, if it does not replace, the normal self. And yet it should not be admitted until all more "natural" suppositions have been exhausted. From the standpoint of the compositeness of an organism, these tragedies would arise when some lower centre, at an imperfect stage of intellectual and moral development, has asserted itself and taken the bit in its mouth. So long as it was controlled by the higher centres, all was well; but when it is released from restraint, the higher centres are overpowered, and the old mental balance is destroyed.

X

In dreams there are experiences of an analogous character. Centres normally under control break away and crudely declare hemselves. As Carpenter observes, in at

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dream a man may run a sword through his best friend and exult in the deed. Psychologists usually attribute this callousness to the inhibition of the higher centres. So far, so good. The complexity is recognised. But the explanation is merely negative, and we have to ask, what of the impulse to kill? Inhibition does not create this; it only acts as a restraint upon it. There must be in the dreamer some centre which, unrestrained, is equal to the deed. When in due subordination such a centre may be supposed to supply the motive power for self-defence, or for just resentment. And this is to say that an individual is a composite co-ordinated unity which may be dissolved.

XI

There is varied evidence, then, that the parts of an organism retain their individuality. More of it will be adduced in the next chapter from a more specially biological point of view. But it will be well in concluding this chapter, to ask whether there is evidence that composite individual organisms can be built up into still larger wholes.

Well, there is the rapidly emerging "psychology of crowds"—including in the term "crowds" all forms and kinds of social

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groupings of individuals, human and animal, large or small, temporary or permament. There can be no reasonable doubt that a crowd is not a simple aggregate, but that it brings into existence certain influences which permeate, as it were, the component individuals and produce a more or less perfect larger unity. And thus it comes that a man will act as a member of a crowd in ways which, as an individual, he would condemn. His individuality remains; but his behaviour is to some extent dominated by subtle influences which, though they are exceedingly obscure, may nevertheless help us to understand how the independence of the parts of an organism is consistent with the unity of control it normally manifests.

Is it fanciful to think that many of the experiences reported by credible witnesses who have taken part in spiritualistic seances are products of "group" influences? May it not be that the members of a "circle," each of them under the spell of highly wrought emotion, and in an atmosphere of extreme mental tension, are for a time fused, so to speak, into a larger whole, and that the dominant member controls the group with sufficient success to suggest common thoughts and experiences? The speculation is not

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altogether fanciful ; for it finds support in the more authenticated phenomena to which hypnotism gives rise.

XII

The cumulative force of these various types of evidence is not small. It furnishes a basis in experience for the fundamental principle under discussion—that organisms, though in a real sense individuals, are not ultimate individuals. They are built up of centres which, by virtue of peculiar relationships established, constitute vital unities. There are descending grades of such unities in the parts of the organism until the ultimate units are reached—the truly individual centres of the will-to-live.

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Chapter III

THE INDEPENDENCE OF CELLS

I

For the physicist, electrons are now the ultimate constituents of matter; for the chemist, the atom. The biologist, in dealing with life, takes the cell as his organic unit. Its structure must not delay us. Suffice it to say that a germ-cell has been likened by a high authority to one of the largest ocean steamers filled with the smallest watches. No wonder that the science of the individual cell, as distinct from that of tissues and organs, has gained a place for itself with a special name—Cytology. The main purpose of this chapter will be to claim for these vital, or organic, units the right to be regarded as conscious centres and genuine, though not ultimate, individuals.

II

We will begin with a kind of cells which possess undoubted freedom of action and separateness of being—the corpuscles that

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feels its way into the Unknown and trusts it. Death is its own healer. Truly a remarkable piece of teleology !

III

Guyan arraigns the inevitability of death. Brought by the slow but relentless ravages of a disease that wasted his frame to face a near approaching end, he declares that he feels, not sorrow, but indignation, as against an injustice of nature, " It is with justice (he exclaims) that we look on nature as a murderess if she kills what is morally best in ourselves and in others." Yes, if she kills. Guyan could not accept such a conclusion. He bursts through all his Positivist fetters to indulge a larger hope.

IV

The line of argument has hitherto been quite general, and has applied to all centres of the will-to-live, subhuman as well as human. It has been founded mainly if not wholly, on facts accessible to science. But our problem is one which concerns the whole man. We must therefore leave the beaten highway of " positive " knowledge, to follow the more obscure and winding paths that lead to higher standpoints. We must follow the clues of the meanings and values that humanity attaches to the fact of death.

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Chapter II

FINITUDE AND CHANGE

I

Infinite—unchanging! Terms so easily used and so perilous in the use. How far they can be used of the world of spirit is subject for disputation. But at least we may say that they cannot apply to the world of actual experience. Man and his environment have limits, and are subject to the law of change. The happening called death sets one of the limits and constitutes one of the changes. Indeed, as we have seen, life itself is a continual dying—and that, not in respect of organic life alone, but of the whole individual. The organism lives at the expense of living matter; the psychical elements in man's nature live at the expense of his successive mental states. On a yet higher plane the law of spiritual life is declared to be "Die to live."

II

Every organism has its material aspects; in popular phrase, it is composed of matter. It

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is therefore subject to physical laws. This is not a concession to Materialism; for our Monadology conceives of the ultimate units, not as particles, but as will-centres; and their material aspects are thus the result of a certain class of interrelations between will-centres—that is to say, they are essentially psychical, though no less real. The development of monads is thus limited, or conditioned, by the laws of matter. Hence the continued flux of organic change, and the necessity for a balance of forces if life is to be maintained in the combinations of monads which constitute organisms. It is in this class of relations that the physical scientist has his rightful sphere.

III

The limitations thus imposed have their effects in the development of the psychical elements in the monads. What this means may be realised by considering a doctrine advocated by von Hartmann. It runs closely parallel to that of the biologists. He argues that nature does not work solely with the aid of organic changes, but also with the aid of changes in consciousness. The mind must be kept vigorous and active if it is to be effective as a factor in development. Now the longer an individual lives, the greater is the

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amount of possible experience he stores; and that which is known awakens only a modified and lessened interest. An old consciousness carries on almost mechanically functions which it has learnt long before, and finds the world less and less stimulating to his faculties. For a young consciousness, on the other hand, all is new; impressions are fresh and vivid; experience of life brims over with interest. It is therefore good that the saturated consciousness should be replaced by one that is keen and full of curiosity. It is here that von Hartmann sees a master purpose of death. He calls the process "psychological selection," and holds that without it, the higher advance of life would not be possible.

Von Hartmann's philosophy is as nearly as may be an antithesis of Monadology; but this particular portion of it is capable of a monadistic interpretation. Social groups, large or small, of human beings are formed under pressure of certain wants or purposes. Consciously and unconsciously individuals build themselves up into associations which, chiefly as a consequence of co-operation, division of labour, and intercourse, afford them means and opportunities for satisfying a wider range of interests. This is as true of the British Empire as it is of a Trades Union, or

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a Society for Psychical Research. These associations are subject to variations analogous to those of organisms. They come into being, flourish and decay. Now inasmuch as their existence depends more evidently on conscious purpose than does the existence of organism, it is easier to understand their dependence on the continuance of such purpose. If a particular trade dies out or migrates, there will be no need of a union to guard its interests. If the objects of a research society are attained, the bond uniting its members is loosed. And so in general, when a social organisation draws near to the fulfilment of its purpose, it becomes feeble, and sooner or later, dissolves. The analogies with the organic world are so strong that the champions of a biological theory of the State are numerous and authoritative.

Now if an organism be viewed as a society of monads, the application of the principle is almost forced upon us. The purposes that can be fulfilled by any particular grouping of monads are limited in many respects, not least by the laws of the physical world. If, then, new and further interests are to be satisfied there must be the decay and dissolution of the organisms that have done their work, and the provision of others which make progress possible.

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IV

The idea of the limitation of human life is not new to the world. The ancients apprehended it, and clothed it according to their wont in picturesque and pregnant myth. They told how the sage centaur refused the seductive boon of immortality when he reflected on what it would entail. They told how Tithonus, loved of Eos and endowed by her prayers with the gift of deathlessness, besought pity from the gods—

> "Let me go: take back thy gift:
> Why should a man desire in any way
> To vary from the kindly race of men,
> Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
> Where all should pause, as is most meet for all."

The mediæval world took up the tale. It had its legend of the wandering Jew; and Dante refused to the damned the hope of death. Later, Swift painted his tragic picture of the immortals, the Struldbruggs. In recent days, John Stuart Mill consoled himself with the thought that we are not chained for an eternity to a conscious existence which we cannot be sure of wanting to conserve. And Max Müller, in more tender and hopeful vein, declares—"To me the older I grow, and the nearer I feel that to me the end must be, the more perfect and beautiful all seems to be."

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Thus it is that the generations of men unite in recognising the naturalness of the dispensation that the aged should be gathered to their fathers. And thus it is that we can supplement the teaching of science in seeking for the teleology of death. Life here is finite, and change is its law. If there is to be progress there must be constant succession of new conditions and new environments. The organism that has done its work falls gently like ripened fruit, almost unperceived, on the bosom of mother earth.

V

The world is finite and is subject to the law of change. The development of organic life upon our globe has been progressive. Every individual organism passes through its stages —germ-cell, embryo, infant, maturity. Just so is it with the grand process as a whole. Away back in the remote geologic past there was the dawn of life. Cycle after cycle this life struggled upwards—Eozoic, Palæozoic, Mesozoic, Cainozoic, on the present. The structures in which it manifested itself became more and more complex, the interactions of correlated parts more intricate, culminated in the human organism. Throughout there has been increasing differentiation. And the

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moving force behind the process has been the striving of monads, of individual will-centres, towards fuller life. The experiences passed through in this vast series of organic groupings are all stored and conserved in the monads. They form the capital for the future working out of further potentialities.

Looked at on this grand scale, history brings before us the spectacle of a mighty stream which has flowed on with endless variety of forms, but without pause. There are reaches where the current is swift and masterful, others where it broadens out and loiters—but the sweep is onward. Here and there are swirls and whirlpools, backwaters, but the main pulse and swing is unmistakable, irresistible —onward to fuller consciousness, richer experience. If death be the penalty to be paid for this, who shall say that the price is too great?

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Chapter III

MORAL ASPECTS

I

Most of the arguments thus far adduced have referred to "natural" death—that is to say, to cases where organisms live out the term that nature would allow them. And rightly so. For as we saw in an early chapter, the cases in which the natural term is not reached are not, strictly speaking, involved in the question; Why do we die? In what follows, the outlook will be wider. Not that the main issue will be lost sight of; it will still be kept in the focus of attention. But inasmuch as moral and spiritual considerations are to come on the scene, the larger aspects of the problem may safely be included.

II

The most obvious of the moral difficulties is that which arises from a frequent sense of outraged justice. If death be really final, then what of the flagrant inequalities in the happiness enjoyed or the pains suffered by sentient beings? In the case of self-conscious

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man, what of the aspirations kindled, the hopes stimulated by the very experience of being alive?

Further, there is the seeming fortuitousness of the happening called "death." An earthquake overwhelms more than a hundred thousand Italians, irrespective of age, sex, character, individual worth or worthlessness. A great genius, whose brain may discover new worlds, is crushed by the fall of a stone—the marvellous tissues brutally scattered by the insensate mass. The only son of a widowed mother dashed and mangled by the waves on a rock-bound coast. The bride of a day shattered in a railway smash. Where should we stop if we attempted, even in barest outline, to enumerate the forms in which death comes to us in an a-moral, if not an im-moral guise?

III

Let us expand a thought already apprehended in its "natural" bearings. Without death, we saw, there could be no development of organic life. Now the development of organic life has brought with it that of the moral sense. The amoeba cannot be supposed to be a consciously moral agent; whatever potentialities it may possess, so long as it is an amoeba it is below the moral level of

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evolution. But out of the ever-increasing complexity of relations brought into play by advances in organisation, there has arisen that special form of consciousness which can distinguish right from wrong. Death itself, then, has been an agent in producing its own arraignment! What is this but to say that if we could penetrate deep enough into the secrets of existence, we should find the arraignment to be baseless?

IV

Premature death! How in all ages that has outraged a sense of justice! Lately, in Rome, there was excavated an urn inscribed with the protest of a mother, "The preposterous laws of death have torn him from my arms. As I have the advantage of years, so ought death to have reaped me first." Or again, a Greek epitaph, "Me, a baby that was tasting life, heaven snatched away, I know not whether for good or for ill. Insatiable death, why hast thou snatched me cruelly in infancy? Why hurriest thou? Are we not all thine in the end?"

This intensity of protest is the outcome of wounded affection that has suffered a shock. And yet there is something deep down in our nature which checks the outburst, and bids us

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wait for more light. The Greeks themselves did not lack such intuitions. Menander's saying comes to mind—"Those whom the gods love die young." So, too, the story of Cleobis and Biton, the two strong youths for whom their proud mother prayed that they might receive the greatest blessing that men might win; and who, in answer to her prayers, fell asleep in the temple precincts, not to wake again. The plan into which these happenings may fit is beyond our grasp—still, there is a prompting conviction that there *is* a plan.

Does the monadistic doctrine help us? Undoubtedly. For if the life of an organism is that of a composite individual, and if it leaves unaffected the continuance of the centres which build it up, a premature death loses that fundamental character attached to it by the ordinary view. It becomes a highly specialised instance of what is happening throughout the whole range of living organisms—an apparent waste of resources. An apple orchard is bursting with blossom; a late frost destroys its promise of fruit. The difficulty is frequently urged in arguments against design in nature, and has its weight. But who shall venture to tell us how the balance of nature's forces is preserved? Who would have thought, before Darwin opened our eyes, that the number of

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cats in a district through the intervention first of mice and then of bees, would determine the frequency of certain flowers in that district? But the knowledge required for the discovery of this interdependence is the merest child's play to that which should reveal to us the conditions on which depend the maturing of fruits. The premature death of an organism, taken in isolation, may appear to be waste; seen in its larger setting, it may have a place in an ordered whole which steadily works towards an increase of life.

From a human standpoint, the premature death of some loved person is bound to leave its deep mark on the character of the bereaved. Shall we venture to trace the purposive working of this influence? What of David's lament over Jonathan?—Milton's Lycidas?—Shelley's Adonais?—Browning's La Saisiaz? Tennyson's In Memoriam?—Emerson's Threnody? That which can thus stir the soul to its depths and evoke its highest powers must have a spiritual function all its own.

V

The *rôle* of death as severing, it may be prematurely, the ties of strong personal affection is preponderantly, though not wholly, of a negative character. We must not forget,

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however, that this same death is indirectly the creator of the strongest and most fundamental of those ties. The relation of parent to offspring rests on the fact that a succession of generations is a condition of organic evolution. And who shall easily exaggerate the influence of that relation in deepening and purifying all forms of social intercourse? It has gained in value and intensity as the scale of life has risen, until it has its flower in the love of noble mother for her child. Death thus stands manifest as a creator of moral and spiritual values second to none in wealth of influence and significance.

VI

Death is linked to moral issues on another side of human experience. Horace gives us his picture of it as "with equal foot knocking at the door of peasant and of king." The inequalities of life are many and glaring—some of them ordained by nature, others of man's own making. But whatever may be the source, death is the great leveller. The truth is brought home to us in rugged fashion by Holbein's Dance of Death. It has been emphasised by countless thinkers whose meditations have turned in this direction, and its impressiveness can never fail. With

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wonted tinge of cynicism, indeed, but with substantial truth, Dr. Mawdsley exclaims—"Hail! all-conquering Death, just, beneficent, divine! Thou that extinguishest the exaltation of pride, the insolence of arrogance, the greed of rapacity, the cruelty of oppression, annihilatest the parade of pomp, the ostentations of luxury, the triumphs of wrong."

"Just, beneficent!"—The beneficence we may grant willingly and thankfully. But what of the justice? The cruelties, the wrongs, the oppressions are not righted by death—they are only ended. That is indeed a boon. But if the idea of justice is to be imported in any valid sense, there must be something after death. The conscious beings that have suffered must have fruition of their experiences in a life beyond.

VII

Springing out of this thought, and in regard of the cruel and the oppressor, presents itself the punitive function of death. Man still imposes the death penalty as his final and supreme sentence on wrongs which are beyond his remedy. Hebrew sages of old conceived that this punitive function was the determining cause of death's coming into the world. In this they were mistaken; it is restricted and

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subsidiary. Nevertheless it has its place when we would estimate the moral aspects of this dread determiner of the span of life. Nay, nature herself imposes this final sentence on those who defy her dictates and her laws, and with irrevocable sternness insists on its execution.

VIII

Death, then, not merely has its place in the natural order as a potent agent in securing the upward curve of organic evolution; it ranks high, also, among those socialising and moralising influences which develop the higher potentialities of terrestrial life.

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CHAPTER IV

VOLUNTARY DEATH

I

SAVE under exceptional circumstances, death comes to an organism against its will. The causes, whether external or internal, are beyond its control. We have to reckon, however, with the fact that death is at times voluntarily faced and even definitely sought.

It is sometimes stated that conscious reversal of the will-to-live is peculiar to man. This is by no means certain. There are well-authenticated cases which show that a will-to-die may be suddenly developed in certain of the creatures below man. The elephant, for instance, is one of the longest lived of animals, and yet readily expires under the influence of emotion of defeat or despair. A typical story is told by Sir E. Tennant, of a rogue elephant that had been, after a severe struggle, tied up and overpowered. " He was at first noisy and violent, but soon lay down peacefully, a sign, according to the hunters, that his death was at hand. Their prognostication was correct ; he continued for about twelve hours to cover himself with dust like

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the others, and to moisten it with water from his trunk; but at length he lay exhausted, and died so calmly that, having been moving but a few minutes before, his death was only perceived by the myriads of black flies by which his body was almost instantly covered, although not one was visible a moment before." Romanes does not hesitate to adopt in this and similar cases the phrase, "death of a broken heart." The suddenness of the elephant's collapse may be without parallel in the animal world, but the emotional attitude which refuses to live is not at all uncommon. Lindsay devotes a special chapter to animal suicide in his work, "Mind in the Lower Animals." It may be doubtful whether the scorpion and snake ever sting themselves to death when they see that escape is impossible. There can be no doubt, however, that many animals under special strains or sufferings definitely prefer death to continued existence. More especially do there come to mind cases of domestic animals which, on the loss of a mate or a loved master, refuse food and quietly die of exhaustion.

II

Speaking generally, it may be maintained that voluntary death is rendered possible by

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the development of intelligence; for then motives emerge as opposed to the natural play of impulse and instinct. As a matter of course, therefore, man displays this conscious will-to-die in a pre-eminent degree. He is constantly faced by situations which raise moral issues of deep import; and these lead at times to a willingness, and even a determination to yield up life itself. We recall the tragedy in Scott's Antarctic expedition when Oates walked out of the shelter into the fatal blizzard that he might not longer be a dangerous burden to his exhausted party. Here we see the will-to-live and the will-to-die in a conflict that is passing strange.

III

Suicide stands out in peculiar prominence as a mode of voluntarily quitting life, especially as it appears to increase with the advance of civilisation. In so far as it is due to insanity and disease it has no direct moral significance. But even in such cases, still more when it is deliberate, it is regarded as unnatural; and the shrinking is intensified by the fact that civilised peoples hold murder to be the most heinous of crimes, and the capital sentence the most deterrent

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of punishments. The general condemnation finds one expression in the Church's refusal to bury the suicide in consecrated ground. The detailed ethics of the subject would take us too far afield, but the broad facts demand notice in so far as they have practical bearing on our problem.

IV

The Greeks, as a people, condemned suicide. They had a sense of awe for the natural order of the world and of life, and they felt that to take one's own life was too violent an interference with that order. But certain of the Greek Schools of philosophy, notably Stoic and Epicurean, reversed the popular verdict and agreed that a man has a right to take his life when he decides that it is not worth living. There are modern philosophers who defend this view. Even Carlyle "once expressed the opinion that there was no justice in depriving a man of the freedom to escape from unbearable tortures by voluntary death, as is done in England by laws and the pressure of public opinion." Leaving aside, however, delicate disputations, it is safe to conclude that suicide is a sign of unnatural conditions; and the increase of it in civilised

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countries is a sure symptom that something is wrong.

V

Who shall draw an unwavering line between the forms of voluntary death which are to be condemned, and those which are held to be free from taint, or even to be honoured? An officer disgraces himself so grossly that life may not be tolerable. A man finds himself in circumstances so compelling that he has to choose between death and dishonour. A captain blows his ship up that it may not fall into the enemy's hand. There are comrades to be rescued from an explosive mine, or children from a burning home; a forlorn hope must be led, the pole reached, a virgin summit climbed. Superstition or tyranny call for the reformer's protest, truth and righteousness need champions—the blood of martyrs flows. Thus it is that we pass from the voluntary death that incurs disgrace to that which gains the Church's canonisation or a nation's gratitude.

VI

Death on the battle field bulks largely in human history, and it has a distinctly volun-

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tary aspect. It may be faced with shrinking, with resignation, with a simple sense of duty to be done, or with a stern joy. The paths of glory lead but to the grave ; and yet how often they have been trod ! Whole nations have delighted in the fray purely for the love of fighting, animated by a craving for military distinction. Cicero declared that " death is dreadful to him whose all is extinguished with his life." We should naturally interpret this of a hope beyond. But the Roman is thinking of posthumous renown ! " It is not dreadful (he adds) to him whose glory can never die." The Greek would fight nobly ; he was too sensitive, however, too reflective, too full of the *joie de vivre*, to give himself up whole-heartedly to the love of battle. The Roman, on the other hand, lived more on the surface of things and was content to make fighting his main business. It would be unjust, though, to deny that a dash of reflection tempered the crudity of his war-ardour—more especially in the form of the sentiment of patriotism. Macaulay rightly presents him as exclaiming—

" And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods ? "

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This stern joy was manifested in its most naïve form by the Vikings, and not much less naïvely in those fired by ideals of mediæval chivalry. But in whatever degree or quality it might appear, it generated fearlessness of death—the natural clinging to life was inhibited or overpowered.

VII

We come to a higher grade of moral action when the voluntary death is prompted by pure patriotism, unalloyed by love of glory, or by lust of conquest. Death is then regarded as an opportunity for asserting the more spiritual elements in human character. Such is the spirit—we are bold to claim—which animated the allies in the conflict with Germany, and which has found a worthy exponent in the author of the "Student in Arms." It can go beyond mere willingness to face death calmly; it can rise to a quiet enthusiasm which exalts. The warrior so inspired is one who

> "Endued as with a sense
> And faculty for storm and turbulence
> Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
> To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
> . . . . . .
> More brave for this that he hath much to love."

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VIII

The noblest forms of voluntary death are thus seen to be those motived by a realisation that only by dying can witness be borne to the spirituality of life. The power of this supreme sacrifice is incontestably enormous. Socrates died that he might revive and deepen belief in the moral constitution of the universe. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the spiritual brotherhood that looks beyond the present to a realised ideal in a higher world. The Christian religion, absorbing the spirit of its divine Founder, teaches that if we would gain the higher life we must be prepared to sacrifice the lower. It is thus that, as Carlyle well puts it, death's physical victory is converted into a moral victory, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that a past life has achieved.

The death of Jesus Christ was voluntary in the full sense of the word, and is central for the religious development of mankind. "No man taketh My life from Me; but I lay it down of myself." It is in the completely voluntary character of this unique self-sacrifice that its saving power consists.

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IX

The subject of voluntary death bristles with moral paradoxes. But in the form of self-sacrifice death is transmuted and touches the sublime. Can we refuse a moral function to an agency which so clearly manifests a spiritual power in lifting the race on to a higher plane and inspires a hope that is full of immortality ?

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Chapter V

DEATH AS A REVEALER

I

We have just been led to recognise in death a moral and spiritual agency of peculiar power and significance. Let us further study its influence in creating and enhancing conceptions which concern the nature of man and his destiny. It is here that the problem of death discovers its most vital interest for us as human beings who seek to know the Whence and the Whither.

II

And first of the poignant soul-moving effect produced by the absoluteness of the separation which death establishes between the living and the departed. It has been powerfully described by F. C. S. Schiller in his " Riddles of the Sphinx "—" He would indeed be a strangely constituted man who did not in the presence of his beloved dead feel the unanswerable impressiveness of death, the

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utter and irretrievable severance which its agency effected. And no argument or consolation can get over the fact that whether or not the dead continue to exist, they are lost to the survivors, and that the ties which bound them to their earthly environment are broken. For whatever mysteries the future may hold in store, no future meeting, no recognition even, can resume the thread or restore the sweetness of the human relations, or assure us that under conditions wholly different the charm of human relationships will be renewed."

A monadistic view of the separation effected by the death of the human organism might soften somewhat the sadness of the latter sentences in this passage. For if centres of consciousness persist, we may trust to the spiritual nature of the cosmic working to secure continuity of development and the preservation of the personal relations that have been established. Nevertheless, the desolateness of bereavement is as thus described. It stupifies, rends, shatters. But for the mind that recovers its balance it is provocative of the deepest of all questionings —it stimulates the highest of the soul's potentialities.

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III

It has been already observed that it is to such experiences that we owe a Milton's "Lycidas," a Shelley's "Adonais," a Tennyson's "In Memoriam." But evidence of their peculiar power is wide as humanity itself. Zola was a man of a distinctly sceptical turn. Here is a passage from a journal written by one of his friends.

"To-night, after dinner, at the foot of the bedstead of carved wood, where coffee was served, Zola began to talk of death, on which his thoughts have been fixed more than ever since the death of his mother. After a short silence, he said that death had made an inroad on the nihilism of his religious convictions, and he could not face the possibility of an eternal separation." What is this but Tennyson?

> "In my spirit will I dwell,
> And dream my dream and hold it true;
> For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
> I cannot think the thing farewell."

And is not Max Müller justified when he exclaims?—"Parting with those we love is hard—only I fear there is nothing else that would have kept our eyes open to what is beyond this life." Is not Schopenhauer justified when he declares that death is the mother of philosophy?

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IV

Had we been immortal here, life would have been lived on the lines that Comte so strenously advocated. Men would have been content to search out effects and causes with a view to the fuller satisfaction of desires and appetites; metaphysics would have no goad; religion would have had no "wells of living water." Death not only impels deep thinking; it also invests that thinking with intense reality and solemnity, in face of issues so fateful and so centrally human for "beings breathing thoughtful breath."

Nor is this function for the "thinker" alone —it is for ordinary plain folk, young and old— for the toiler and the man of action. The sailor has his "Tom Bowling"; the soldier sounds his "Last Post." The peasant widow who loses an only son, already half dwells in "the better land." For all sorts and conditions death lights up the dull drab of every-day life with mystic hues, and opens a door into the world of the unseen.

V

Apart from frequent misinterpretations of the Genesis story, Christian teachers have dealt but little with our special problem.

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Eschatology is in abundance, as also speculation concerning the future life ; but enquiry as to why we die has been rare and fitful. This particular field would therefore seem to be open to an unusual degree for unbiassed exploration from the Christian standpoint. This essay is not intended to raise direct theological issues ; its object is much more general. But a glance at the general trend of New Testament teaching concerning death will at once serve to bring out the inwardness of the monadology here advocated, and to show, moreover, that while there is much that favours a monadistic solution, there is nothing that is in essential contradiction to it.

It is needless to say that many of the New Testament terms and phrases concerning death are such as were in current use, and that strict interpretation of them is unjustifiable. If we would have the spirit, and not the mere letter, we must dive beneath the surface of the terminology, and catch as nearly as we may the spiritual drift which finds expression in them.

VI

Allusion was made in an early chapter to St. Paul's conception of " the spiritual body of Christ." What could be more absolutely

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in harmony with the monadistic view? Individuals separated in time and space, with various functions and of varying dignity, are regarded as spiritually related, each to all and all to each, in an organism which pulses with a common life for the development of the individual members. It has a supreme, a governing Monad—the unique Individual, its Divine Head. It has a unity which, though entire and actively inclusive, leaves full play for the continued independence of the members and provides the conditions for the realising of their highest potentialities. Its aim and end is "the manifestation of the sons of God."

The teaching of Jesus Christ gives to this conception a "natural" setting. The spiritual society is to begin like a seed germ and is to expand until it becomes a great tree in which the birds of heaven may shelter. Or again, we are told that there must be "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The teaching is biological throughout—it deals with organisms.

In St. Paul's theology, the physical part of death is never lost sight of—but it tends to lose its primary significance and to be transcended in moralising analogies. Consider such a note as this from Sanday and Headlam's Commentary (Romans vi. 8) "The different senses of 'life'

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and 'death' always lie together with St. Paul, and his thought glides backwards and forwards from one to another almost imperceptibly; now he lays a little more stress on the physical sense, now on the ethical; at one moment on the present state and another on the future." That is to say, the physical aspects of death are merging in ethical and spiritual notions which refer to the state of the conscious centre rather than of the organism which perishes.

In this, the Apostle is but apprehending the teaching contained in the Gospels. We there find that death is regarded as simply marking a limit set to a particular field of action. "Work while it is yet day; the night cometh when no man can work." The dissolution of the body is almost ignored. This is in harmony with the monadistic position; for as we have seen, the organism is a means for presenting a certain range of experience. And the ethical requirement is that full use shall be made of the opportunities it offers.

VII

It was thus that Christianity speedily changed the traditional attitude of fear of death into one of calm acquiescence. Evidence of the change is found in the striking fact that from

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the earliest times the Church's sacred buildings have been used as burial places, and as depositories for the bones of martyrs. Death might still be looked upon as an enemy; but it assumed a new *role*. Instead of being an end it was a happening that had to be endured as a condition of a new beginning—of a life on a higher plane of being. "Foolish one! (said St. Paul) That which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die." What is this but to hold that death is a causal link in a natural and ordered process?

VIII

It may be asked whether the doctrine of a soul inhabiting and using a body does not satisfy the implications of New Testament teaching at least as well as the Monadistic view. For answer to such an objection, the statements in the chapter on Death and the Philosophers will suffice to show that the soul-body conception is hopelessly dualistic, and fails to give a rational explanation of why the soul should be immured in a body or of why that body should die. Whereas the monadistic doctrine can meet both these difficulties. The body is an association of monads such that it furnishes conditions for the development of those monads. Natural death supervenes

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when the organism has done its work, both as regards its constituent centres and as regards provision for the continuance of the upward curve of life.

Manifestly the monadistic doctrine is lamentably incomplete. Knowledge will have to accumulate and reflection will have to mature before, supposing it to be sound, it can be fitted in detail into a larger world-view. But at any rate it would seem to carry us further than any of its rivals. At any rate it furnishes a reasonable answer to the question, Why do we die ?—an answer that allows us to be loyal to the teachings of science, and at the same time justifies the indulgence of a hope full of immortality. It helps us to understand that spite of the shadow, spite of the problems of evil, the sway of death is by divine ordinance, and that its true name

> " Is Onward, no discordance in the roll
> And march of that eternal harmony
> Whereto the worlds beat time."

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